



THE.
DETECTIVE OFFICER

By 'WATERS'

AND OTHER TALES



W. & R. CHAMBERS
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1878



THE DETECTIVE OFFICER.

BY 'WATERS.'

GAMESTERS.



LITTLE more than a year after the period when adverse circumstances—chiefly the result of my own reckless follies—compelled me to enter the ranks of the metropolitan police, as the sole means left me of procuring food and raiment, the attention of one of the principal chiefs of the force was attracted towards me by the ingenuity and boldness which I was supposed to have manifested in hitting upon and unravelling a clue which ultimately led to the detection and punishment of the perpetrators of an artistically contrived fraud upon an eminent tradesman of the west end of London. The chief sent for me; and after a somewhat lengthened conversation, not only expressed approbation of my conduct in the particular matter under discussion,

but hinted that he might shortly need my services in other affairs requiring intelligence and resolution.

'I think I have met you before,' he remarked with a meaning smile on dismissing me, 'when you occupied a different position from your present one. Do not alarm yourself; I have no wish to pry unnecessarily into other men's secrets. Waters is a name common enough in *all* ranks of society, and I may, you know'—here the cold smile deepened in an ironical expression—'be mistaken. At all events, the testimony of the gentleman whose recommendation obtained you admission to the force—I have looked into the matter since I heard of your behaviour in the late business—is a sufficient guarantee that nothing more serious than imprudence and folly can be laid to your charge. I have neither right nor inclination to inquire further. To-morrow, in all probability, I shall send for you.'

I came to the conclusion, as I walked homewards, that the chief's intimation of having previously met me in another sphere of life was a random and unfounded one, as I had seldom visited London in my prosperous days, and still more rarely mingled in its society. My wife, however, to whom I of course related the substance of the conversation, reminded me that he had once been at Doncaster during the races; and suggested that he might possibly have seen and noticed me there. This was a sufficiently probable explanation of the hint; but whether the correct one or not, I cannot decide, as he never afterwards alluded to the subject, and I had not the slightest wish to renew it.

Three days elapsed before I received the expected summons. On waiting on him, I was agreeably startled to find that I was to be at once employed on a mission which the most sagacious and experienced of detective-officers would have felt honoured to undertake.

GAMESTERS.

'Here is a written description of the persons of this gang of blacklegs, swindlers, and forgers,' concluded the Commissioner, summing up his instructions. 'It will be your object to discover their private haunts, and secure legal evidence of their nefarious practices. We have been hitherto baffled, principally, I think, through the too hasty zeal of the officers employed: you must especially avoid that error. They are practised scoundrels; and it will require considerable patience, as well as acumen, to unkennel and bring them to justice. One of their more recent victims is young M^r Merton, son by a former marriage of the Dowager Lady Ewerton.* Her ladyship has applied to us for assistance in extricating him from the toils in which he is meshed. You will call on her at five o'clock this afternoon—in plain clothes of course—and obtain whatever information on the subject she may be able to afford. Remember to communicate *directly* with me; and any assistance you may require shall be promptly rendered.' With these and a few other minor directions, needless to recapitulate, I was dismissed to a task which, difficult and possibly perilous as it might prove, I hailed as a delightful relief from the wearing monotony and dull routine of ordinary duty.

I hastened home; and after dressing with great care—the best part of my wardrobe had been fortunately saved by Emily from the wreck of my fortunes—I proceeded to Lady Ewerton's mansion. I was immediately marshalled to the drawing-room, where I found her ladyship and her daughter—a beautiful, fairy-looking girl—awaiting my arrival. Lady Ewerton appeared greatly surprised at my appearance, differing, as I daresay it altogether did, from her abstract idea of a policeman, however attired or disguised; and it

* The names mentioned in this narrative are, for obvious reasons, fictitious.

was not till she had perused the note of which I was the bearer, that her haughty and incredulous stare became mitigated to a glance of lofty condescending civility.

'Be seated, Mr Waters,' said her ladyship, waving me to a chair. 'This note informs me that you have been selected for the duty of endeavouring to extricate my son from the perilous entanglements in which he has unhappily involved himself.'

I was about to reply—for I was silly enough to feel somewhat nettled at the noble lady's haughtiness of manner—that I was engaged in the public service of extirpating a gang of swindlers with whom her son had involved himself; and was there to procure from her ladyship any information she might be possessed of likely to forward so desirable a result. But fortunately the remembrance of my actual position, spite of my gentleman's attire, flashed vividly upon my mind; and instead of permitting my glib tongue to wag irreverently in the presence of a right honourable, I bowed with deferential acquiescence.

Her ladyship proceeded, and I in substance obtained the following information :

Mr Charles Merton, during the few months which had elapsed since the attainment of his majority, had very literally 'fallen amongst thieves.' A passion for gambling seemed to have taken entire possession of his being; and almost every day, as well as night, of his wretched and feverish life was passed at play. A run of ill-luck, according to his own belief—but in very truth a run of downright robbery—had set in against him, and he had not only dissipated all the ready-money which he had inherited, and the large sums which the foolish indulgence of his lady-mother had supplied him with, but had involved himself in bonds, bills, and other obligations to a frightful amount. The principal agent in effecting this ruin was one Sandford

—a man of fashionable and dashing exterior, and the presiding spirit of the knot of desperadoes whom I was commissioned to hunt out. Strange to say, Mr Merton had the blindest reliance upon this man's honour; and even now—tricked, despoiled as he had been by him and his gang—relied upon his counsel and assistance for escape from the desperate position in which he was involved. The Everton estates had passed, in default of male issue, to a distant relative of the late lord; so that ruin, absolute and irremediable, stared both the wretched dupe and his relatives in the face. Lady Everton's jointure was not a very large one, and her son had been permitted to squander sums which should have been devoted to the discharge of claims which were now pressed harshly against her.

I listened with the deepest interest to Lady Everton's narrative. Repeatedly during the course of it, as she incidentally alluded to the manners and appearance of Sandford, who had been introduced by Mr Merton to his mother and sister, a suspicion, which the police papers had first awakened, that the gentleman in question was an old acquaintance of my own, and one, moreover, whose favours I was extremely desirous to return in kind, flashed with increased conviction across my mind. This surmise I of course kept to myself; and after emphatically cautioning the ladies to keep our proceedings a profound secret from Mr Merton, I took my leave, amply provided with the resources requisite for carrying into effect the scheme which I had resolved upon. I also arranged that, instead of waiting personally on her ladyship, which might excite observation and suspicion, I should report progress by letter through the post.

'If it *should* be he!' thought I, as I emerged into the street. The bare suspicion had sent the blood through my veins with furious violence. 'If this Sandford be, as I suspect, that villain Cardon, success will indeed be triumph

—victory ! Lady Everton need not in that case seek to animate my zeal by promises of money recompense. A blighted existence, a young and gentle wife by his means cast down from opulence to sordid penury, would stimulate to energy and action the dullest craven that ever crawled the earth. Pray Heaven my suspicion prove correct ; and then, O mine enemy, look well to yourself, for the avenger is at your heels !’

Sandford, I ~~had~~ been instructed, was usually present at the Italian Opera during the ballet : the box he generally occupied was designated in the memoranda of the police, and as I saw by the bills that a very successful piece was to be performed that evening, I determined on being present.

I entered the house a few minutes past ten o’clock, just after the commencement of the ballet, and looked eagerly round. The box in which I was instructed to seek my man was empty. The momentary disappointment was soon repaid. Five minutes had not elapsed when Cardon, looking more insolently triumphant than ever, entered arm-in-arm with a pale aristocratic-looking young man, whom, from his striking resemblance to a portrait in Lady Everton’s drawing-room, I had no difficulty in deciding to be Mr Merton. My course of action was at once determined on. Pausing only to master the emotion which the sight of the glittering reptile in whose poisonous folds I myself had been involved and crushed, inspired, I passed to the opposite side of the house, and boldly entered the box. Cardon’s back was towards me, and I tapped him lightly on the shoulder. He turned quickly round ; and if a basilisk had confronted him, he could scarcely have exhibited greater terror and surprise. My aspect, nevertheless, was studiously bland and conciliating, and my outstretched hand seemed to invite a renewal of our old friendship.

‘Waters !’ he at last stammered, feebly accepting my

proffered grasp—‘who would have thought of meeting you here?’

‘Not you, certainly, since you stare at an old friend as if he were some frightful goblin about to swallow you. Really’——

‘Hush! Let us speak together in the lobby.—An old friend,’ he added in answer to Mr Merton’s surprised stare. ‘We will return in an instant.’

‘Why, what is all this, Waters?’ said Cardon, recovering his wonted *sang-froid* the instant we were alone. ‘I understood you had retired from amongst us; were in fact—what shall I say?’——

‘Ruined—done up! Nobody should know that better than you.’

‘My good fellow, you do not imagine’——

‘I imagine nothing, my dear Cardon. I was very thoroughly done—done *brown*, as it is written in the vulgar tongue. But fortunately my kind old uncle’——

‘Passgrove is dead!’ interrupted my old acquaintance, eagerly jumping to a conclusion, ‘and you are his heir! I congratulate you, my dear fellow. This is indeed a charming “reverse of circumstances.”’

‘Yes; but mind I have given up the old game. No more dice-devilry for me. I have promised Emily never even to touch a card again.’

The cold, hard eye of the incarnate fiend—he was little else—gleamed mockingly as these ‘good intentions’ of a practised gamester fell upon his ear; but he only replied: ‘Very good; quite right, my dear boy. But come, let me introduce you to Mr Merton, a highly connected personage, I assure you. By-the-bye, Waters,’ he added in a caressing, confidential tone, ‘my name, for family and other reasons, which I will hereafter explain to you, is for the present Sandford.’

‘Sandford?’

‘Yes: do not forget. But *allons*, or the ballet will be over.’

I was introduced in due form to Mr Merton as an old and esteemed friend, whom he—Sandford—had not seen for many months. At the conclusion of the ballet, Sandford proposed that we should adjourn to the European Coffee-house, nearly opposite. This was agreed to, and out we sallied. At the top of the staircase we jostled against the Commissioner, who, like us, was leaving the house. He bowed slightly to Mr Merton’s apology, and his eye wandered briefly and coldly over our persons; but not the faintest sign of interest or recognition escaped him. I thought it possible he did not know me in my changed apparel; but looking back after descending a few steps, I was quickly undeceived. A sharp, swift glance, expressive both of encouragement and surprise, shot out from under his pent-house brows, and as swiftly vanished. He did not know how little I needed spurring to the goal we had both in view!

We discussed two or three bottles of wine with much gaiety and relish. Sandford especially was in exuberant spirits; brimming over with brilliant anecdote and sparkling badinage. He saw in me a fresh, rich prey, and his eager spirit revelled, by anticipation, in the victory which he nothing doubted to obtain over my ‘excellent intentions and wife-pledged virtue.’ About half-past twelve o’clock he proposed to adjourn. This was eagerly assented to by Mr Merton, who had for some time exhibited unmistakable symptoms of impatience and unrest.

‘You will accompany us, Waters?’ said Sandford, as we rose to depart. ‘There is, I suppose, no vow registered in the matrimonial archives against *looking on* at a game played by others?’

‘O no ; but don’t ask me to play.

‘Certainly not ;’ and a devilish sneer curled his lip.
‘Your virtue shall suffer no temptation, be assured.’

We soon arrived before the door of a quiet, respectable-looking house in one of the streets leading from the Strand : a low peculiar knock, given by Sandford, was promptly answered ; then a pass-word, which I did not catch, was whispered by him through the key-hole, and we passed in.

We proceeded up-stairs to the first floor, the shutters of which were carefully closed, so that no intimation of what was going on could possibly reach the street. The apartment was brilliantly lighted ; a roulette table and dice and cards were in full activity ; wine and liquors of all varieties were profusely paraded. There were about half-a-dozen persons present, I soon discovered, besides the gang, and that comprised eleven or twelve well-dressed desperadoes, whose sinister aspect induced a momentary qualm lest one or more of the pleasant party might suspect or recognise my vocation. This, however, I reflected, ‘was scarcely possible.’ My beat during the short period I had been in the force was far distant from the usual haunts of such gentry, and I was otherwise unknown in London. Still, questioning glances were eagerly directed towards my introducer ; and one big burly fellow, a foreigner—the rascals were the scum of various countries—was very unpleasantly inquisitorial. ‘*Y’en répons !*’ I heard Sandford say in answer to his iterated queries ; and he added something in a whisper which brought a sardonic smile to the fellow’s lips, and induced a total change in his demeanour towards myself. This was reassuring ; for though provided with pistols, I should, I felt, have little chance with such utterly reckless ruffians as those by whom I was surrounded. Play was proposed ; and though at first

stoutly refusing, I feigned to be gradually overcome by irresistible temptation, and sat down to blind hazard with my foreign friend for moderate stakes. I was graciously allowed to win; and in the end found myself richer in devil's money by about ten pounds. Mr Merton was soon absorbed in the chances of the dice, and lost large sums, for which, when the money he had brought with him was exhausted, he gave written acknowledgments. The cheating practised upon him was really audacious; and any one but a tyro must have repeatedly detected it. He, however, appeared not to entertain the slightest suspicion of the 'fair-play' of his opponents, guiding himself entirely by the advice of his friend and counsellor, Sandford, who did not himself play. The amiable assemblage broke up about six in the morning, each person retiring singly by the back way, receiving, as he departed, a new pass-word for the next evening.

A few hours afterwards, I waited on the Commissioner to report the state of affairs. He was delighted with the fortunate *début* I had made, but still strictly enjoined patience and caution. It would have been easy, as I was in possession of the pass-word, to have surprised the confederacy in the act of gaming that very evening; but this would only have accomplished a part of the object aimed at. Several of the fraternity—Sandford amongst the number—were suspected of uttering forged foreign bank-notes, and it was essential to watch narrowly for legal evidence to insure their conviction. It was also desirable to restore, if possible, the property and securities of which Mr Merton had been pillaged.

Nothing of especial importance occurred for seven or eight days. Gaming went on as usual every evening, and Mr Merton became of course more and more involved: even his sister's jewels, which he had surreptitiously

obtained—to such a depth of degradation will this frightful vice plunge men otherwise honourable—had been staked and lost; and he was, by the advice of Sandford, about to conclude a heavy mortgage, in order not only to clear off his enormous ‘debts of honour,’ but to acquire fresh means of winning back’—that *ignis-fatuus* of all gamblers—his tremendous losses! A new preliminary ‘dodge’ was, I observed, now brought into action. Mr Merton esteemed himself a knowing hand at *écarté*; it was introduced; and he was permitted to win every game he played, much to the apparent annoyance and discomfiture of the losers. As this was precisely the snare into which I had myself fallen, I of course the more readily detected it, and felt quite satisfied that a *grand coup* was meditated. In the meantime I had not been idle. Sandford was *confidentially* informed that I was only waiting in London to receive between four and five thousand pounds—part of Uncle Passgrove’s legacy—and then intended to hasten back immediately to sunny Yorkshire. To have seen the villain’s eyes as I incidentally, as it were, announced my errand and intention! They fairly flashed with infernal glee! Ah, Sandford! Sandford! you were, with all your cunning, but a sand-blind idiot to believe the man you had wronged and ruined could so easily forget the debt he owed you!

The crisis came swiftly on. Mr Merton’s mortgage-money was to be paid on the morrow; and on that day too, I announced, the fabulous thousands receivable by me were to be handed over. Mr Merton, elated by his repeated triumphs at *écarté*, and prompted by his friend Sandford, resolved, instead of cancelling the bonds and obligations held by the conspirators, to redeem his losses by staking on that game his ready-money against those liabilities. This was at first demurred to with much apparent earnest-

ness by the winners ; but Mr Merton, warmly seconded by Sandford, insisting upon the concession, as he deemed it, it was finally agreed that *écarté* should be the game by which he might hope to regain the fortune and the peace of mind he had so rashly squandered : the last time, should he be successful—and was he not sure of success?—he assured Sandford, that he would ever handle cards or dice. He should have heard the mocking merriment with which the gang heard Sandford repeat this resolution to amend his ways—*when* he had recovered back his wealth !

The day so eagerly longed for by Merton and the confederates—by the spoilers and their prey—arrived ; and I awaited with feverish anxiety the coming on of night. Only the chief conspirators—eight in number—were to be present ; and no stranger except myself—a privilege I owed to the moonshine legacy I had just received—was to be admitted to this crowning triumph of successful fraud. One hint only I had ventured to give Mr Merton, and that under a promise, ‘on his honour as a gentleman,’ of inviolable secrecy. It was this : ‘Be sure, before commencing play to-morrow night, that the bonds and obligations you have signed, the jewels you have lost, with a sum in notes or gold to make up an equal amount to that which you mean to risk, are actually deposited on the table.’ He promised to insist on this condition. It involved much more than he dreamt of.

My arrangements were at length thoroughly complete ; and at a few minutes past twelve o’clock the whispered password admitted me into the house. An angry altercation was going on. Mr Merton was insisting, as I had advised, upon the exhibition of a sum equal to that which he had brought with him—for, confident of winning, he was determined to recover his losses to the last farthing ; and

although his bonds, bills, obligations, his sister's jewels, and a large amount in gold and genuine notes were produced, there was still a heavy sum deficient. 'Ah, by-the-bye,' exclaimed Sandford as I entered, 'Waters can lend you the sum for an hour or two—for a *consideration*,' he added in a whisper. 'It will soon be returned.'

'No, thank you,' I answered coldly. 'I never part with my money till I have lost it.'

A malignant scowl passed over the scoundrel's features; but he made no reply. Ultimately it was decided that one of the fraternity should be despatched in search of the required amount. He was gone about half an hour, and returned with a bundle of notes. They were, as I hoped and expected, forgeries on foreign banks. Mr. Merton looked at and counted them; and play commenced.

As it went on, so vividly did the scene recall the evening that had sealed my own ruin, that I grew dizzy with excitement, and drained tumbler after tumbler of water to allay the fevered throbbing of my veins. The gamblers were fortunately too much absorbed to heed my agitation. Merton lost continuously—without pause or intermission. The stakes were doubled—trebled—quadrupled! His brain was on fire; and he played, or rather lost, with the recklessness of a madman.

'Hark! what's that?' suddenly exclaimed Sandford, from whose Satanic features had been gradually slipping the mask he had so long worn before Merton. 'Did you not hear a noise below?'

My ear had caught the sound; and I could better interpret it than he. It ceased.

'Touch the signal-bell, Adolphe,' added Sandford.

Not only the play, but the very breathing of the villains, was suspended as they listened for the reply.

It came. The answering tinkle sounded once—twice—

thrice. 'All right!' shouted Sandford. 'Proceed! The farce is nearly played out.'

I had instructed the officers that two of them in plain clothes should present themselves at the front door, obtain admission by means of the pass-word I had given them, and immediately seize and gag the doorkeeper. I had also acquainted them with the proper answer to the signal-ring—three distinct pulls at the bell-handle communicating with the first floor. Their comrades were then to be admitted, and they were all to ascend the stairs silently, and wait on the landing till summoned by me to enter and seize the gamblers. The back entrance to the house was also securely but unobtrusively watched.

One fear only disturbed me: it was lest the scoundrels should take alarm in sufficient time to extinguish the lights, destroy the forged papers, and possibly escape by some private passage which might, unknown to me, exist.

Rousing myself, as soon as the play was resumed, from the trance of memory by which I had been in some sort absorbed, and first ascertaining that the handles of my pistols were within easy reach—for I knew I was playing a desperate game with desperate men—I rose, stepped carelessly to the door, partially opened it, and bent forward, as if listening for a repetition of the sound which had so alarmed the company. To my great delight the landing and stairs were filled with police-officers—silent and stern as death. I drew back, and walked towards the table at which Mr Merton was seated. The last stake—an enormous one—was being played for. Merton lost. He sprang upon his feet, death-pale, despairing, overwhelmed, and a hoarse execration surged through his clenched teeth. Sandford and his associates coolly raked the plunder together, their features lighted up with fiendish glee.

'Villain!—traitor!—miscreant!' shrieked Mr Merton,

as if smitten with sudden frenzy, and darting at Sandford's throat: 'you, devil that you are, have undone, destroyed me!'

'No doubt of it,' calmly replied Sandford, shaking off his victim's grasp; 'and I think it has been very artistically and effectually done too. Snivelling, my fine fellow, will scarcely help you much.'

Mr Merton glared upon the taunting villain in speechless agony and rage.

'Not quite so fast, *Cardon*, if you please,' I exclaimed, at the same time taking up a bundle of forged notes. 'It does not appear to me that Mr Merton has played against equal stakes, for unquestionably this paper is not genuine.'

'Dog!' roared Sandford, 'do you hold your life so cheap?' and he rushed towards me, as if to seize the forged notes.

I was as quick as he, and the levelled tube of a pistol sharply arrested his eager onslaught. The entire gang gathered near us, flaming with excitement. Mr Merton looked bewilderedly from one to another, apparently scarcely conscious of what was passing around him.

'Wrench the papers from him!' screamed Sandford, recovering his energy. 'Seize him—stab, strangle him!'

'Look to yourself, scoundrel!' I shouted with equal vehemence. 'Your hour is come!—Officers, enter and do your duty!'

In an instant the room was filled with police; and surprised, panic-stricken, paralysed by the suddenness of the catastrophe, the gang were all secured without the slightest resistance, though most of them were armed, and marched off in custody.

Sandford or *Cardon*, as chief conspirator—he had half-a-dozen *aliases*—was transported for life: the rest were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment. My task

was effectually accomplished. My superiors were pleased to express very warm commendation of the manner in which I had acquitted myself; and the first step in the promotion which ultimately led to my present position in another branch of the public service was soon afterwards conferred upon me. Mr Merton had his bonds, obligations, jewels and money restored to him; and, taught wisdom by terrible experience, never again entered a gaming-house. Neither he nor his lady-mother was ungrateful for the service had been fortunate enough to render them.



X. Y. Z.

 THE following advertisement appeared in several of the London journals in the year 1832: 'If Owen Lloyd, a native of Wales, and who, it is believed, resided for many years in London as clerk in a large mercantile establishment, will forward his present address to X. Y. Z., Post-Office, St Martin's-le-Grand; to be left till called for, he will hear of something greatly to his advantage.'

- My attention had been attracted to this notice by its very frequent appearance in the journal which I was chiefly in the habit of reading, and, from professional habits of thinking, I had set it down in my own mind as a *trap* for some offender against the principles of *meum* and *tuum*, whose presence in a criminal court was very earnestly desired. I was confirmed in this conjecture by observing that in despair of Owen Lloyd's voluntary disclosure of his retreat, a reward of fifty guineas, payable by a respectable solicitor of Lothbury, was ultimately offered to any person who would furnish X. Y. Z. with the missing man's address. 'An old bird,' I mentally exclaimed on perusing this paragraph, 'and not to be caught with chaff; that is evident.'

Still more to excite my curiosity, and at the same time bring the matter within the scope of my own particular functions, I found, on taking up the *Police Gazette*, a reward of thirty guineas offered for the apprehension of Owen Lloyd, whose person and manners were minutely described. 'The pursuit grows hot,' thought I, throwing down the paper, and hastening to attend a summons just brought me from the superintendent; 'and if Owen Lloyd is still within the four seas, his chance of escape seems but a poor one.'

On waiting on the superintendent, I was directed to put myself in immediate personal communication with a Mr. Smith, the head of an eminent wholesale house in the City.

'In the City?'

'Yes; but your business with Mr Smith is relative to the extensive robbery at his West-end residence a week or two ago. The necessary warrants for the apprehension of the suspected parties have been, I understand, obtained, and on your return will, together with some necessary memoranda, be placed in your hands.'

I at once proceeded to my destination, and on my arrival was immediately ushered into a dingy back-room, where I was desired to wait till Mr Smith, who was just then busily engaged, could speak to me. Casting my eyes over a table, near which the clerk had placed me a chair, I perceived a newspaper and the *Police Gazette*, in both of which the advertisements for the discovery of Owen Lloyd were strongly underlined. 'Oh, ho!' thought I; 'Mr Smith, then, is the X. Y. Z. who is so extremely anxious to renew his acquaintance with Mr Owen Lloyd; and I am the honoured individual selected to bring about the desired interview. Well, it is in my new vocation—one which can scarcely be dispensed with, it seems, in this busy, scheming life of ours.'

Mr Smith did not keep me waiting long. He seemed a hard, shrewd, business man, whose still wiry frame, brisk, active gait and manner, and clear, decisive eye, indicated—though the snows of more than sixty winters had passed over his head—a yet vigorous life, of which the morning and the noon had been spent in the successful pursuit of wealth and its accompaniment—social consideration and influence.

‘You have,’ I suppose, read the advertisements marked on these papers?’

‘I have, and of course conclude that you, sir, are X. Y. Z.’

‘Of course conclusions,’ rejoined Mr Smith with a quite perceptible sneer, ‘are usually very silly ones: in this instance especially so. My name, you ought to be aware, is Smith: X. Y. Z., whoever he may be, I expect in a few minutes. In just seventeen minutes,’ added the exact man of business; ‘for I, by letter, appointed him to meet me here at one o’clock precisely. My motive in seeking an interview with him, it is proper I should tell you, is the probability that he, like myself, is a sufferer by Owen Lloyd, and may not therefore object to defray a fair share of the cost likely to be incurred in unkennelling the delinquent and prosecuting him to conviction; or, which would be far better, he may be in possession of information that will enable us to obtain completely the clue I already almost grasp. But we must be cautious: X. Y. Z. *may* be a relative or friend of Lloyd’s, and in that case, to possess him of our plans would answer no purpose but to afford him an opportunity of baffling them. Thus much premised, I had better at once proceed to read over to you a few particulars I have jotted down, which, you will perceive, throw light and colour over the suspicions I have been within these few days compelled to entertain. You are doubtless acquainted

with the full particulars of the robbery at my residence, Brook Street, last Thursday fortnight?'

'Yes; especially the report of the officers, that the crime must have been committed by persons familiar with the premises and the general habits of the family.'

'Precisely. Now, have you your memorandum-book ready?'

'Quite so.'

'You had better write with ink,' said Mr Smith, pushing an inkstand and pens towards me. 'Important memoranda should never, where there is a possibility of avoiding it, be written in pencil. Friction, thumbing, use of any kind, often partially obliterates them, creating endless confusion and mistakes. Are you ready?'

'Perfectly.'

'Owen Lloyd, a native of Wales, and it was understood, descended from a highly respectable family there. About five feet eight; but I need not describe his person over again. Many years with us, first as junior, then as head clerk; during which his conduct, as regards the firm, was exemplary. A man of yielding, irresolute mind—if indeed a person can be said to really possess a mind at all who is always changing it for some other person's—incapable of saying "No" to embarrassing, impoverishing requests—one, in short, Mr Waters, of that numerous class of individuals whom fools say are nobody's enemies but their own, as if that were possible'——

'I understand; but I really do not see how this bears upon'——

'The mission you are directed to undertake? I think it does, as you will presently see. Three years ago, Owen Lloyd having involved himself, in consequence of the serious defect of character I have indicated, in large liabilities for pretended friends, left our employment; and to avoid a jail

fled, no one could discover whither. Edward Jones, also a native of the principality, whose description, as well as that of his wife, you will receive from the superintendent, was discharged about seven years since from our service for misconduct, and went, we understood, to America. He always appeared to possess great influence over the mind of his considerably younger countryman Lloyd. Jones and his wife were seen three evenings since by one of our clerks near Temple Bar. I am of opinion, Mr Waters,' continued Mr Smith, removing his spectacles, and closing the note-book from which he had been reading, 'that it is only the first step in crime, or criminal imprudence; which feeble-minded men especially long hesitate or boggle at: and I now more than suspect that, pressed by poverty, and very possibly yielding to the persuasions and example of Jones—who, by the way, was as well acquainted with the premises in Brook Street as his fellow-clerk—the once honest, ductile Owen Lloyd is now a common thief and burglar.'

'Indeed!'

'Yes. A more minute search led to the discovery,' the day before yesterday, of a pocket-book behind some bookshelves in the library. As no property had been taken from that room—though the lock of a large iron chest, containing coins and medals, had been evidently tampered with—the search there was not at first very rigorous. That pocket-book—here it is—belonged, I know, to Owen Lloyd when in our service. See, here are his initials stamped on the cover.'

'Might he not have inadvertently left it there when with you?'

'You will scarcely think so after reading the date of the five-pound note of the Hampshire County Bank, which you will find within the inner lining.'

'The date is, 1831.'

‘Exactly. I have also strong reason for believing that Owen Lloyd is now, or has been lately, residing in some part of Hampshire.’

‘That is important.’

‘This letter,’ continued Mr Smith; and then pausing for a brief space in some embarrassment, he added: ‘The Commissioner informed me, Mr Waters, that you were a person upon whose good sense and *discretion*, as well as sagacity and courage, every confidence might be placed. I therefore feel less difficulty than I otherwise should in admitting you a little behind the family screen, and entering with you upon matters one would not willingly have bruited in the public ear.’

I bowed, and he presently proceeded.

‘Owen Lloyd, I should tell you, is married to a very amiable, superior sort of woman, and has one child; a daughter named Caroline, an elegant, gentle-mannered, beautiful girl, I admit, to whom my wife was much attached, and she was consequently a frequent visitor in Brook Street. This I always felt was very imprudent; and the result was that my son Arthur Smith, only about two years her senior—she was just turned of seventeen when her father was compelled to flee from his creditors—formed a silly, boyish attachment for her. They have since, I gather from this letter, which I found yesterday in Arthur’s dressing-room, carried on, at long intervals, a clandestine correspondence, waiting for the advent of more propitious times—which, being interpreted,’ added Mr Smith with a sardonic sneer, ‘means of course my death and burial.’

‘You are in possession, then, if Miss Caroline Lloyd is living with her father, of his precise place of abode?’

‘Not exactly. The correspondence is, it seems, carried on without the knowledge of Owen Lloyd; and the girl states, in answer, it should seem, to Arthur’s inquiries, that, her

father would never forgive her if, under present circumstances, she disclosed his place of residence—we can now very well understand that—and she entreats Arthur not to persist, at least for the present, in his attempts to discover her. My son, you must understand, is now of age, and so far as fortune is concerned, is, thanks to a legacy from an aunt on his mother's side, independent of me.'

'What post-mark does the letter bear?'

'Charing-Cross. Miss Lloyd states that it will be posted in London by a friend; that friend being, I nothing doubt, her father's confederate, Jones. But to us the most important part of the epistle is the following line: "My father met with a sad accident in the forest some time ago, but is now quite recovered." The words *in the forest* have, you see, been written over, but not so entirely as to prevent their being, with a little trouble, traced. Now, coupling this expression with the Hampshire bank-note, I am of opinion that Lloyd is concealed somewhere in the New Forest.'

'A shrewd guess, at all events.'

'You now perceive what weighty motives I have to bring this man to justice. The property carried off I care little comparatively about; but the intercourse between the girl and my son must at any cost be terminated'——

He was interrupted by a clerk, who entered to say that Mr William Lloyd, the gentleman who had advertised as 'X. Y. Z.,' desired to speak to him. Mr Smith directed Mr Lloyd to be shewn in; and then, snatching up the *Police Gazette*, and thrusting it into one of the table-drawers, said in a low voice, but marked emphasis: 'A relative, no doubt, by the name: be silent, and be watchful.'

A minute afterwards Mr Lloyd was ushered into the room. He was a thin, emaciated, and apparently sorrow-stricken man, on the wintry side of middle age, but of

mild, courteous, gentlemanly speech and manners. He was evidently nervous and agitated, and after a word or two of customary salutation, said hastily : ' I gather from this note, sir, that you can afford me tidings of my long-lost brother Owen : where is he ? ' He looked eagerly round the apartment, gazed with curious earnestness in my face, and then again turned with tremulous anxiety to Mr Smith. ' Is he dead ? Pray do not keep me in suspense. '

' Sit down, sir, ' said Mr Smith, pointing to a chair. ' Your brother, Owen Lloyd, was for many years a clerk in this establishment '——

' Was—was ! ' interrupted Mr Lloyd with greatly increased agitation : ' not now, then—he has left you ? '

' For upwards of three years. A few days ago—pray do not interrupt me—I obtained intelligence of him, which, with such assistance as you may possibly be able to afford, will perhaps suffice to enable this gentleman '——pointing to me——' to discover his present residence. '

. I could not stand the look which Mr Lloyd fixed upon me, and turned hastily away to gaze out of the window, as if attracted by the noise of a squabble between two draymen, which fortunately broke out at the moment in the narrow, choked-up street.

' For what purpose, sir, are you instituting this eager search after my brother ? It cannot be that—— No, no—he has left you, you say, more than three years : besides, the bare supposition is as wicked as absurd. '

' The truth is, Mr Lloyd, ' rejoined Mr Smith after a few moments' reflection, ' there is great danger that my son may disadvantageously connect himself with your—with your brother's family—may, in fact, marry his daughter Caroline. Now I could easily convince Owen '——

. ' Caroline ! ' interjected Mr Lloyd with a tremulous accent, and his dim eyes suffused with tears——' Caroline !—ay, truly

her daughter would be named Caroline.' An instant after, he added, drawing himself up with an air of pride and some sternness: 'Caroline Lloyd, sir, is a person who, by birth and, I doubt not, character and attainments, is a fitting match for the son of the proudest merchant of this proud city.'

'Very likely,' rejoined Mr Smith dryly; 'but you must excuse me for saying that, as regards *my* son, it is one which I will at any cost prevent.'

'How am I to know,' observed Mr Lloyd, whose glance of pride had quickly passed away, 'that you are dealing fairly and candidly with me in the matter?'

In reply to this home-thrust, Mr Smith placed the letter addressed by Miss Lloyd to his son in the hands of the questioner, at the same time explaining how he had obtained it.

Mr Lloyd's hands trembled, and his tears fell fast over the letter as he hurriedly perused it. It seemed by his broken, involuntary ejaculations, that old thoughts and memories were deeply stirred within him. 'Poor girl!—so young, so gentle, and so sorely tried! Her mother's very turn of thought and phrase. Owen too, artless, honourable, just as he was ever, except when the dupe of knaves and villains.'

He seemed buried in thought for some time after the perusal of the letter; and Mr Smith, whose cue it was to avoid exciting suspicion by too great eagerness of speech, was growing fidgety. At length, suddenly looking up, he said in a dejected tone: 'If this is all you have ascertained, we seem as far off as ever. I can afford you no help.'

'I am not sure of that,' replied Mr Smith. 'Let us look calmly at the matter. Your brother is evidently not living in London, and that accounts for your advertisements not being answered.'

‘Truly.’

‘If you look at the letter attentively, you will perceive that three important words, “in the forest,” have been partially erased.’

‘Yes, it is indeed so; but what’——

‘Now, is there no particular locality in the country to which your brother would be likely to betake himself in preference to another? Gentlemen of fancy and sentiment,’ added Mr Smith, ‘usually fall back, I have heard, upon some favourite haunt of early days when pressed by adversity.’

‘It is natural they should,’ replied Mr Lloyd, heedless of the sneer. ‘I have felt that longing for old haunts and old faces in intensest force, even when I was what the world calls prospering in strange lands; and how much more—— But no; he would not return to Wales—to Caermarthen—to be looked down upon by those amongst whom our family for so many generations stood equal with the highest. Besides, I have personally sought him there—in vain.’

‘But his wife—*she* is not a native of the principality?’

‘No. Ah! I remember. The forest! It must be so! Caroline Heyworth, whom we first met in the Isle of Wight, is a native of Beaulieu, a village in the New Forest, Hampshire. A small, very small property there, bequeathed by an uncle, belonged to her, and perhaps has not been disposed of. How came I not to think of this before? I will set out at once—and yet pressing business requires my stay here for a day or two.’

‘This gentleman, Mr Waters, can proceed to Beaulieu immediately.’

‘That must do then. You will call on me, Mr Waters—here is my address—before you leave town. Thank you. And God bless you, sir,’ he added, suddenly seizing Mr Smith’s hand, ‘for the light you have thrown upon this

wearying and, I feared, hopeless search. You need not be so anxious, sir, to send a special messenger to release your son from his promise of marriage to my niece. None of us, be assured, will be desirous of forcing her upon a reluctant family.' He then bowed and withdrew.

'Mr Waters,' said Mr Smith with a good deal of sternness, as soon as we were alone, 'I expect that no sentimental crotchet will prevent your doing your duty in this matter?'

'What right,' I answered with some heat, 'have you, sir, to make such an insinuation?'

'Because I perceived, by your manner, that you disapproved my questioning Mr Lloyd as to the likeliest mode of securing his brother.'

'My manner but interpreted my thoughts: still, sir, I know what belongs to my duty, and shall perform it.'

'Enough: I have nothing more to say.'

I drew on my gloves, took up my hat, and was leaving the room, when Mr Smith exclaimed: 'Stay one moment, Mr Waters: you see that my great object is to break off the connection between my son and Miss Lloyd?'

'I do.'

'I am not anxious, you will remember, to press the prosecution if, *by a frank written confession of his guilt*, Owen Lloyd places an insuperable bar between his child and mine. You understand?'

'Perfectly. But permit me to observe, that the *duty* you just now hinted I might hesitate to perform, will not permit me to be a party to any such transaction. Good-day.'

I waited on Mr William Lloyd soon afterwards, and listened with painful interest to the brief history which he, with childlike simplicity, narrated of his own and brother's fortunes. It was a sad, oft-told tale. They had been early

left orphans ; and deprived of judicious guidance, had run —William more especially—a wild career of dissipation, till *all* was gone. Just before the crash came, they had both fallen in love with the same woman, Caroline Heyworth, who had preferred the meeker, more gentle-hearted Owen to his elder brother. They parted in anger. William obtained a situation as bailiff and overseer of an estate in Jamaica, where, by many years of toil, good fortune, and economy, he at length ruined his health and restored his fortunes ; and had now returned to die rich in his native country ; and as he had till an hour before feared, unlamented and untended save by hirelings. I promised to write immediately I had seen his brother ; and with a sorrowful heart took leave of the vainly rejoicing, prematurely aged man.

I arrived at Southampton by the night coach—the railway was but just begun, I remember—and was informed that the best mode of reaching Beaulieu—Bewley, they pronounced it—was by crossing the Southampton river to the village of Hythe, which was but a few miles distant from Beaulieu. As soon as I had breakfasted, I hastened to the quay, and was soon speeding across the tranquil waters in one of the sharp-stemmed wherries which plied constantly between the shores. My attention was soon arrested by two figures in the stern of the boat, a man and woman. A slight examination of their features sufficed to convince me that they were Jones and his wife. They evidently entertained no suspicion of pursuit ; and as I heard them tell the boatman they were going on to *Bewley*, I determined for the present not to disturb their fancied security. It was fortunate I did so. As soon as we had landed, they passed into a mean-looking dwelling, which, from some nets and a boat under repair in a small yard in front of it, I concluded to be a fisherman's. As no vehicle could be readily procured,

I determined on walking on, and about twelve o'clock easily reached Beaulieu, which is charmingly situated just within the skirts of the New Forest. After partaking of a slight repast at the principal inn of the place—I forget its name; but it was, I remember, within a stone's-throw of the celebrated Beaulieu Abbey ruins—I easily contrived, by a few careless indirect questions, to elicit all the information I required of the loquacious waiting-maid. Mr Lloyd, who seemed to bear an excellent character, lived, I was informed, at a cottage about half a mile distant from the inn, and chiefly supported himself as a measurer of timber—beech and ash: a small stock—the oak was reserved for government purposes—he usually kept on hand. Miss Caroline, the girl said, did beautiful fancy-work; and a group of flowers painted by her, as natural as life, was framed and glazed in the parlour, if I would like to see it. Upon the right track, sure enough! Mr Lloyd, there could be no longer a doubt, had unconsciously betrayed his unfortunate, guilty brother into the hands of justice, and I, an agent of the iron law, was already upon the threshold of his hiding-place! I felt no pleasure at the success of the scheme. To have bravely and honestly stood up against an adverse fate for so many years, only to fall into crime just as fortune had grown weary of persecuting him, and a long-estranged brother had returned to raise him and his to their former position in society, was melancholy indeed! And the young woman too, whose letter breathed so pure, so gentle, so patient a spirit!—it would not bear thinking about—and I resolutely strove to look upon the affair as one of everyday routine. It would not do, however; and I was about to quit the room in no very enviable frame of mind, when my boat companions, Mr and Mrs Jones, entered, and seated themselves at one of the tables. The apartment was rather a large one, and as I was seated in the corner of a box at some

distance from the entrance, they did not at first observe me; and several words caught my ear which awakened a strong desire to hear more. That I might do so, I instantly adopted a very common, but not the less often very successful device. As soon as the new-comers perceived me, their whispered colloquy stopped abruptly; and after a minute or so, the man said, looking hard at me: 'Good-day, sir; you have had rather a long walk;' and he glanced at my dusty boots.

'Sir,' I replied, inclosing my left ear with my hand in the manner of a natural ear-trumpet, 'did you speak?'

'A dusty walk,' he rejoined in a voice that might have been heard in a hurricane or across Fleet Street.

'One o'clock!' I replied, pulling out my watch. 'No: it wants a quarter yet.'

'Deaf as the Monument,' said Jones to his companion. 'All right.'

The suspended dialogue was but partially resumed.

'Do you think,' said the woman, after the lapse of about five minutes—'do you think Owen and his family will go with us? I hope not.'

'Not he: I only asked him just for the say-so of the thing. He is too chicken-hearted for that, or for anything else that requires pluck.'

Finishing the spirits and water they had ordered, they soon afterwards went out. I followed.

As soon as we had gone about a hundred paces from the house, I said: 'Pray can you tell me which is Mr Lloyd the beech-merchant's house?'

'Yes,' replied the man, taking hold of my arm, and hallooing into my ear with a power sufficient to really deafen one for life: 'we are going there to dine.'

I nodded comprehension, and on we journeyed. We were met at the door by Owen Lloyd himself—a man in

whose countenance guilelessness, even to simplicity, seemed stamped by nature's own true hand. So much, thought I, for the reliance to be placed on physiognomy! 'I have brought you a customer,' said Mr Jones; 'but he is as deaf as a stone.' I was courteously invited in by signs; and with much hallooing and shouting, it was finally settled that, after dinner, I should look over Mr Lloyd's stock of wood. Dinner had just been placed on the table by Mrs Lloyd and her daughter. A still very comely, interesting woman was Mrs Lloyd, though time and sorrow had long since set their unmistakable seals upon her. Her daughter was, I thought, one of the most charming, graceful young women I had ever seen, spite of the tinge of sadness which dwelt upon her sweet face, deepening its interest if it somewhat diminished its beauty. My heart ached to think of the misery the announcement of my errand must presently bring on such gentle beings—innocent, I felt confident, even of the knowledge of the crime that had been committed. I dreaded to begin—not, Heaven knows, from any fear of the men, who, compared with me, were poor, feeble creatures, and I could easily have mastered half-a-dozen such; but the females—that young girl especially—how encounter *their* despair? I mutely declined dinner, but accepted a glass of ale, and sat down till I could muster sufficient resolution for the performance of my task; for I felt this was an opportunity of quietly effecting the capture of both the suspected criminals which *must* not be neglected.

Dinner was just over when Mrs Lloyd said: 'Oh, Mr Jones, have you seen anything of my husband's pocket-book? It was on a shelf in the room where you slept—not the last time, but when you were here about three weeks ago. We can find it nowhere; and I thought you might possibly have taken it by mistake.'

'A black, common-looking thing?' said Jones.

‘Yes.’

‘I *did* take it by mistake. I found it in one of my parcels, and put it in my pocket, intending of course to return it when I came back; but I remember, when wanting to open a lock of which I had lost the key, taking it out to see if it contained a pencil-case which I thought might answer the purpose; and finding none, tossing it away in a pet, I could not afterwards find it.’

‘Then it is lost?’

‘Yes; but what of that? There was nothing in it.’

‘You are mistaken,’ rejoined Owen; ‘there was a five-pound country note in it, and the loss will—— What is the matter, friend?’

I had sprung upon my feet with uncontrollable emotion: Mr Lloyd’s observation recalled me to myself, and I sat down again, muttering something about a sudden pain in the side.

‘Oh, if that’s the case,’ said Jones, ‘I’ll make it up willingly. I am pretty rich, you know, just now.’

‘We shall be much obliged to you,’ said Mrs Lloyd; ‘its loss would be a sad blow to us.’

‘How came you to send those heavy boxes here, Jones?’ said Owen Lloyd. ‘Would it not have been better to have sent them direct to Portsmouth, where the vessel calls?’

‘I had not quite made up my mind to return to America then; and I knew they would be safer here than anywhere else.’

‘When do you mean to take them away? We are so badly off for room, that they terribly hamper us.’

‘This evening, about nine o’clock. I have hired a smack at Hythe to take us, bag and baggage, down the river to meet the liner which calls off Portsmouth tomorrow. I wish we could persuade you to go with us.’

‘Thank you, Jones,’ replied Owen in a dejected tone. ‘I

have very little to hope for here ; still my heart clings to the old country.'

I had heard enough ; and hastily rising, intimated a wish to look at the timber at once. Mr Lloyd immediately rose, and Jones and his wife left the cottage to return to Hythe at the same time that we did. I marked a few pieces of timber, and promising to send for them in the morning, hastened away.

A mountain seemed removed from off my breast : I felt as if I had achieved a great personal deliverance. Truly a wonderful interposition of Providence, I thought, that has so signally averted the fatal consequences likely to have resulted from the thoughtless imprudence of Owen Lloyd in allowing his house to be made, however innocently, a receptacle for stolen goods, at the solicitations, too, of a man whose character he knew to be none of the purest. He had had a narrow escape, and might with perfect truth exclaim :

' There 's a Divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.'

The warrants of which I was the bearer the London police authorities had taken care to get indorsed by a magistrate of the county of Hampshire, who happened to be in London, so that I found no difficulty in arranging effectually for the capture and safe custody of Jones and his assistants when he came to fetch his booty.

I had just returned to the Beaulieu inn, after completing my arrangements, when a carriage drove furiously up to the door, and who should, to my utter astonishment, alight, but Mr William Lloyd, and Messrs Smith, father and son ! I hastened out, and briefly enjoining caution and silence, begged them to step with me into a private room. The agitation of Mr Lloyd and of Mr Arthur Smith was extreme, but Mr Smith appeared cold and impassive as

ever. I soon ascertained that Arthur Smith, by his mother's assistance, I suspect, had early penetrated his father's schemes and secrets, and had, in consequence, caused Mr William Lloyd to be watched home, with whom, immediately after I had left, he had a long conference. Later in the evening an *éclaircissement* with the father took place; and after a long and stormy discussion, it was resolved that all three should the next morning post down to Beaulieu, and act as circumstances might suggest. My story was soon told. It was received of course with unbounded joy by the brother and the lover; and even through the father's apparent indifference I could perceive that his refusal to participate in the general joy would not be of long duration. The large fortune which Mr William Lloyd intimated his intention to bestow upon his niece was a new and softening element in the affair.

Mr Smith, senior, ordered his dinner; and Mr Lloyd and Arthur Smith—but why need I attempt to relate what *they* did? I only know that when, a long time afterwards, I ventured to look in at Mr Owen Lloyd's cottage, all the five inmates—brother, uncle, lover, niece, and wife—were talking, laughing, weeping, smiling, like distracted creatures, and seemed utterly incapable of reasonable discourse. An hour after that, as I stood screened by a belt of forest-trees in wait for Mr Jones and company, I noticed, as they all strolled past me in the clear moonlight, that the tears, the agitation had passed away, leaving only smiles and grateful joy on the glad faces so lately clouded by anxiety and sorrow. A mighty change in so brief a space!

Mr Jones arrived with his cart and helpers in due time. A man who sometimes assisted in the timber-yard was deputed, with an apology for the absence of Mr Lloyd, to deliver the goods. The boxes, full of plate and other valuables, were soon hoisted in, and the cart moved off. I

let it proceed about a mile, and then, with the help I had placed in readiness, easily secured the astounded burglar and his assistants ; and early the next morning Jones was on his road to London. He was tried at the ensuing Old Bailey sessions, convicted, and transported for life ; and the discretion I had exercised in not executing the warrant against Owen Lloyd was decidedly approved of by the authorities.

It was about two months after my first interview with Mr Smith that, on returning home one evening, my wife placed before me a piece of bride-cake and two beautifully engraved cards united with white satin ribbon, bearing the names of Mr and Mrs Arthur Smith. I was more gratified by this little act of courtesy, for Emily's sake, as those who have temporarily fallen from a certain position in society will easily understand, than I should have been by the costliest present. The service I had rendered was purely accidental : it has nevertheless been always kindly remembered by all parties whom it so critically served.



FLINT JACKSON.



ARNHAM hops are world-famous, or at least famous in that huge portion of the world where English ale is drunk, and whereon, I have a thousand times heard and read, the sun never sets. The name, therefore, of the pleasant Surrey village, in and about which the events I am about to relate occurred, is, I may fairly presume, known to many of my readers. I was ordered to Farnham to investigate a case of burglary, committed in the house of a gentleman of the name of Hursley, during the temporary absence of the family, which had completely nonplussed the unpractised Dogberries of the place, albeit it was not a riddle at all difficult to read. The premises, it was quickly plain to me, had been broken, not into, but out of; and a watch being set upon the motions of the very specious and clever person left in charge of the house and property, it was speedily discovered that the robbery had been effected by herself and a confederate of the name of Dawkins, her brother-in-law. Some of the stolen goods were found secreted at his lodgings; but the most valuable portion, consisting of plate and a small quantity of jewellery, had disappeared: it had

questionless been converted into money, as considerable sums, in sovereigns, were found upon both Dawkins and the woman, Sarah Purday. Now, as it had been clearly ascertained that neither of the prisoners had left Farnham since the burglary, it was manifest there was a receiver near at hand who had purchased the missing articles. Dawkins and Purday were, however, dumb as stones upon the subject; and nothing occurred to point suspicion till early in the evening previous to the second examination of the prisoners before the magistrates, when Sarah Purday asked for pen, ink, and paper for the purpose of writing to one Mr Jackson, in whose service she had formerly lived. I happened to be at the prison, and of course took the liberty of carefully unsealing her note and reading it. It revealed nothing; and save by its extremely cautious wording, and abrupt peremptory tone, coming from a servant to her former master, suggested nothing. I had carefully reckoned the number of sheets of paper sent into the cell, and now on recounting them found that three were missing. The turnkey returned immediately, and asked for the two other letters she had written. The woman denied having written any other, and for proof pointed to the torn fragments of the missing sheets lying on the floor. These were gathered up and brought to me; but I could make nothing out of them, every word having been carefully run through with the pen and converted into an unintelligible blot. The request contained in the actually written letter was one simple enough in itself, merely, 'that Mr Jackson would not on any account fail to provide her, in consideration of past services, with legal assistance on the morrow.' The first nine words were strongly underlined; and I made out after a good deal of trouble that the word 'pretence' had been partially effaced and 'account' substituted for it.

• 'She need not have wasted three sheets of paper upon

such a nonsensical request as that,' observed the turnkey. 'Old Jackson wouldn't give sixpence to save her or anybody else from the gallows.'

'I am of a different opinion. But tell me, what sort of a person is this former master of hers?'

'All I know about him is that he's a cross-grained, old curmudgeon, living about a mile out of Farnham, who scrapes money together by lending small sums upon notes-of-hand at short dates and at enormous interest. Flint Jackson folk about here call him.'

'At all events, forward the letter at once, and to-morrow we shall see—what we shall see. Good-evening.'

It turned out as I anticipated. A few minutes after the prisoners were brought into the justice-room, a Guildford solicitor of much local celebrity arrived, and announced that he appeared for both the inculpated parties. He was allowed a private conference with them, at the close of which he stated that his clients would reserve their defence. They were at once committed for trial, and I overheard the solicitor assure the woman that the ablest counsel on the circuit would be retained in their behalf.

I had no longer a doubt that it was my duty to know something further of this suddenly generous Flint Jackson, though how to set about it was a matter of considerable difficulty. There was no legal pretence for a search-warrant, and I doubted the prudence of proceeding upon my own responsibility with so astute an old fox as Jackson was represented to be; for, supposing him to be a confederate with the burglars, he had by this time in all probability sent the stolen property away—to London in all likelihood; and should I find nothing, the consequences of ransacking his house merely because he had provided a former servant with legal assistance would be serious. Under these circumstances I wrote to headquarters for instructions, and by

return of post received orders to prosecute the inquiry thoroughly, but cautiously, and to consider time as nothing so long as there appeared a chance of fixing Jackson with the guilt of receiving the plunder. Another suspicious circumstance that I have omitted to notice in its place was that the Guildford solicitor tendered bail for the prisoners to any reasonable amount, and named Enoch Jackson as one of the securities. Bail was, however, refused.

There was no need for over-hurrying the business, as the prisoners were committed to the Surrey Spring Assizes, and it was now the season of the hop-harvest—a delightful and hilarious period about Farnham when the weather is fine and the yield abundant. I, however, lost no time in making diligent and minute inquiry as to the character and habits of Jackson, and the result was a full conviction that nothing but the fear of being denounced as an accomplice could have induced such a miserly, iron-hearted rogue to put himself to charges in defence of the imprisoned burglars.

One afternoon, whilst pondering the matter, and at the same time enjoying the prettiest and cheerfulest of rural sights, that of hop-picking, the apothecary at whose house I was lodging—we will call him Mr Morgan; he *was* a Welshman—tapped me suddenly on the shoulder, and looking sharply round, I perceived he had something he deemed of importance to communicate.

‘What is it?’ I said quickly.

‘The oddest thing in the world. There’s Flint Jackson, his deaf old woman, and the young people lodging with him, all drinking and boozing away at yon alehouse.’

‘Shew them to me, if you please.’

A few minutes brought us to the place of boisterous entertainment, the lower room of which was suffocatingly full of tipplers and tobacco-smoke. We nevertheless con-

trived to edge ourselves in; and my companion stealthily pointed out the group, who were seated together near the farther window, and then left me to myself.

The appearance of Jackson entirely answered to the popular prefix of Flint attached to his name. He was a wiry, gnarled, heavy-browed, iron-jawed fellow of about sixty, with deep-set eyes aglow with sinister and greedy instincts. His wife, older than he, and as deaf apparently as the door of a dungeon, wore a simpering, imbecile look of wonderment, it seemed to me, at the presence of such unusual and abundant cheer. The young people, who lodged with Jackson, were really a very frank, honest, good-looking couple, though not then appearing to advantage—the countenance of Henry Rogers being flushed and inflamed with drink, and that of his wife clouded with frowns at the situation in which she found herself, and the riotous conduct of her husband. Their brief history was this. They had both been servants in a family living not far distant from Farnham—Sir Thomas Lethbridge's, I understood—when about three or four months previous to the present time Flint Jackson, who had once been in an attorney's office, discovered that Henry Rogers, in consequence of the death of a distant relative in London, was entitled to property worth something like £1500. There were, however, some law difficulties in the way, which Jackson offered, if the business was placed in his hands, to overcome for a consideration, and in the meantime to supply board and lodging and such necessary sums of money as Henry Rogers might require. With this brilliant prospect in view, service became at once utterly distasteful. The fortunate legatee had for some time courted Mary Elkins, one of the ladies' maids, a pretty bright-eyed brunette; and they were both united in the bonds of holy matrimony on the very day the 'warnings' they had given expired. Since

then they had lived at Jackson's house in daily expectation of their 'fortune,' with which they proposed to start in the public-house line.

Finding myself unrecognised, I called boldly for a pint and a pipe, and after some manœuvring contrived to seat myself within ear-shot of Jackson and his party. They presented a strange study. Henry Rogers was boisterously excited, and not only drinking freely himself, but treating a dozen fellows round him, the cost of which he from time to time called upon 'Old Flint,' as he courteously styled his ancient friend, to discharge.

'Come, fork out, Old Flint!' he cried again and again. 'It'll be all right, you know, in a day or two, and a few halfpence over. Shell out, old fellow! What signifies, so you're happy!'

Jackson complied with an affectation of acquiescent gaiety ludicrous to behold. It was evident that each successive pull at his purse was like wrenching a tooth out of his head, and yet while the dismalest of smiles wrinkled his wolfish-mouth, he kept exclaiming: 'A fine lad—a fine lad! Generous as a prince—generous as a prince! Ah! another round! He minds money no more than as if gold was as plentiful as gravel! But a fine generous lad for all that!'

Jackson, I perceived, drank considerably, as if incited thereto by compressed savageness. The pretty young wife would not taste a drop, but tears frequently filled her eyes, and bitterness pointed her words as she vainly implored her husband to leave the place and go home with her. To all her remonstrances the maudlin drunkard replied only by foolery, varied occasionally by an attempt at a line or two of the song of *The Thorn*.

'But you *will* plant thorns, Henry,' rejoined the provoked wife in a louder and angrier tone than she ought perhaps to

have used—~~not~~ only in my bosom, but your own, if you go on in this sottish, disgraceful way.'

'Always quarrelling, always quarrelling!' remarked Jackson pointedly, towards the by-standers—'*always* quarrelling!'

'Who is always quarrelling?' demanded the young wife sharply. 'Do you mean Henry and me?'

'I was only saying, my dear, that you don't like your husband to be so generous and free-hearted—that's all,' replied Jackson, with a confidential wink at the persons near him.

'Free-hearted and generous! Fool-hearted and crazy, you mean!' rejoined the wife, who was much excited. 'And you ought to be ashamed of yourself to give him money for such brutish purposes.'

'Always quarrelling, always quarrelling!' iterated Jackson, but this time unheard by Mrs Rogers—'*always*, perpetually quarrelling!'

I could not quite comprehend all this. If so large a sum as £1500 was really coming to the young man, why should Jackson wince as he did at disbursing small amounts which he could repay himself with abundant interest? If otherwise—and it was probable he should not be repaid—what meant his reiterated 'Fine generous lad!' 'Spirited young man!' and so on? What, above all, meant that look of diabolical hate which shot out from his cavernous eyes towards Henry Rogers when he thought himself unobserved, just after satisfying a fresh claim on his purse? Much practice in reading the faces and deportment of such men made it pretty clear to me that Jackson's course of action respecting the young man and his money was not yet decided upon in his own mind; that he was still perplexed and irresolute; and hence the apparent contradiction in his words and acts.

Henry Rogers at length dropped asleep with his head upon one of the settle-tables ; Jackson sank into sullen silence ; the noisy room grew quiet ; and I came away.

I was impressed with a belief that Jackson entertained some sinister design against his youthful and inexperienced lodgers, and I determined to acquaint them with my suspicions. For this purpose Mr Morgan, who had a patient living near Jackson's house, undertook to invite them to tea on some early evening, on the pretence that he had heard of a tavern that might suit them when they should receive their fortune. Let me confess, too, that I had another design besides putting the young people on their guard against Jackson. I thought it very probable that it would not be difficult to glean from them some interesting and suggestive particulars concerning the ways, means, practices, outgoings and incomings, of their worthy landlord's household.

Four more days passed unprofitably away, and I was becoming weary of the business, when about five o'clock in the afternoon the apothecary galloped up to his door on a borrowed horse, jumped off with surprising celerity, and with a face as white as his own magnesia, burst out as he hurried into the room where I was sitting : ' Here's a pretty kettle of fish ! Henry Rogers has been poisoned, and by his wife ! '

' Poisoned ? '

' Yes, poisoned ; although, thanks to my being on the spot, I think he will recover. But I must instantly to Dr Edwards : I will tell you all when I return.'

The promised ' all ' was this : Morgan was passing slowly by Jackson's house, in the hope of seeing either Mr or Mrs Rogers, when the servant-woman Jane Riddet ran out and begged him to come in, as their lodger had been taken suddenly ill. Ill indeed ! The surface of his body was cold

as death, and the apothecary quickly discovered that he had been poisoned with sulphuric acid (oil of vitriol), a quantity of which he, Morgan, had sold a few days previously to Mrs Rogers, who, when purchasing it, said Mr Jackson wanted it to apply to some warts that annoyed him. Morgan fortunately knew the proper remedy, and desired Jackson, who was in the room, and seemingly very anxious and flurried, to bring some soap instantly, a decoction of which he proposed to give immediately to the seemingly dying man. The woman-servant was gone to find Mrs Rogers, who had left about ten minutes before, having first made the tea in which the poison had been taken. Jackson hurried out of the apartment, but was gone so long that Morgan, becoming impatient, scraped a quantity of plaster off the wall, and administered it with the best effect. At last Jackson came back, and said there was unfortunately not a particle of soap in the house. A few minutes afterwards the young wife, alarmed at the woman-servant's tidings, flew into the room in an agony of alarm and grief. Simulated alarm, crocodile grief, Mr Morgan said; for there could, in his opinion, be no doubt that she had attempted to destroy her husband. Mr Jackson, on being questioned, peremptorily denied that he had ever desired Mrs Rogers to procure sulphuric acid for him, or had received any from her—a statement which so confounded the young woman that she instantly fainted. The upshot was that Mrs Rogers was taken into custody and lodged in prison.

This terrible news flew through Farnham like wild-fire. In a few minutes it was upon everybody's tongue: the hints of the quarrelsome life the young couple led, artfully spread by Jackson, were recalled, and no doubt appeared to be entertained of the truth of the dreadful charge. I had no doubt either, but my conviction was not that of the Farnham folk. This, then, was the solution of the struggle I

had seen going on in Jackson's mind ; this the realisation of the dark thought which I had imperfectly read in the sinister glances of his restless eyes. He had intended to destroy both the husband and wife—the one by poison, and the other by the law ! Doubtless, then, the £1500 had been obtained, and this was the wretched man's horrid device for retaining it ! I went over with Morgan early the next morning to see the patient, and found that, thanks to the prompt antidote administered, and Dr Edwards's subsequent active treatment, he was rapidly recovering. The still-suffering young man, I was glad to find, would not believe for a moment in his wife's guilt. I watched the looks and movements of Jackson attentively—a scrutiny which he, now aware of my vocation, by no means appeared to relish.

'Pray,' said I, suddenly addressing Riddet the woman-servant—'pray, how did it happen that you had no soap in such a house as this yesterday evening?'

'No soap !' echoed the woman with a stare of surprise. 'Why'——

'No—no soap,' hastily broke in her master with loud and menacing emphasis. 'There was not a morsel in the house. I bought some afterwards in Farnham.'

The cowed and bewildered woman slunk away. I was more than satisfied ; and judging by Jackson's countenance, which changed beneath my look to the colour of the lime-washed wall against which he stood, he surmised that I was.

My conviction, however, was not evidence, and I felt that I should need even more than my wonted good-fortune to bring the black crime home to the real perpetrator. For the present, at all events, I must keep silence—a resolve I found hard to persist in at the examination of the accused wife, an hour or two afterwards, before the county magis-

trates. Jackson had hardened himself to iron, and gave his lying evidence with ruthless self-possession. He had *not* desired Mrs Rogers to purchase sulphuric acid; had *not* received any from her. In addition also to his testimony that she and her husband were always quarrelling, it was proved by a respectable person that high words had passed between them on the evening previous to the day the criminal offence was committed, and that foolish, passionate expressions had escaped her about wishing to be rid of such a drunken wretch. This evidence, combined with the medical testimony, appeared so conclusive to the magistrates, that spite of the unfortunate woman's wild protestations of innocence, and the rending agony which convulsed her frame and almost choked her utterance, she was remanded to prison till that day-week, when, the magistrates informed her, she would be again brought up for the merely formal completion of the depositions, and be then fully committed on the capital charge.

I was greatly perturbed, and walked for two or three hours about the quiet neighbourhood of Farnham, revolving a hundred fragments of schemes for bringing the truth to light, without arriving at any feasible conclusion. One only mode of procedure seemed to offer, and that but dimly, a hope of success. It was, however, the best I could hit upon, and I directed my steps towards the Farnham prison. Sarah Purday had not yet, I remembered, been removed to the county jail at Guildford.

'Is Sarah Purday,' I asked the turnkey, 'more reconciled to her position than she was?'

'She's just the same—bitter as gall, and venomous as a viper.'

This woman, I should state, was a person of fierce will and strong passions, and in early life had been ~~in~~ ⁱⁿ a most unfortunate situation.

‘Just step into her cell,’ I continued, ‘upon some excuse or other, and carelessly drop a hint that if she could prevail upon Jackson to get her brought by *habeas* before a judge in London, there could be no doubt of her being bailed.’

The man stared, but after a few words of pretended explanation, went off to do as I requested. He was not long gone. ‘She’s all in a twitteration at the thoughts of it,’ he said; ‘and must have pen, ink, and paper without a moment’s delay, bless her consequence!’

These were supplied; and I was soon in possession of her letter, couched cautiously, but more peremptorily than the former one. I need hardly say it did not reach its destination. She passed the next day in a state of feverish impatience; and no answer returning, wrote again, her words this time conveying an evident though indistinct threat. I refrained from visiting her till two days had thus passed, and found her, as I expected, eaten up with fury. As I entered the cell, she glared at me like a chained tigress.

‘You appear vexed,’ I said, ‘no doubt because Jackson declines to get you bailed. He ought not to refuse you such a trifling service, considering all things.’

‘All what things?’ replied the woman, eyeing me fiercely.

‘That you know best, though I have a shrewd guess.’

‘What do you guess? and what are you driving at?’

‘I will deal frankly with you, Sarah Purday. In the first place, you must plainly perceive that your *friend* Jackson has cast you off—abandoned you to your fate; and that fate will, there can be no doubt, be transportation.’

‘Well,’ she impatiently snarled, ‘suppose so; what then?’

‘This—that you can help yourself in this difficulty by helping me.’

‘As how?’

‘In the first place, give me the means of convicting Jackson of having received the stolen property.’

‘Ha! How do you know that?’

‘Oh, I know it very well—as well almost as you do. But this is not my chief object; there is another, far more important one;’ and I ran over the incidents relative to the attempt at poisoning. ‘Now,’ I resumed, ‘tell me, if you will, your opinion on this matter.’

‘That it was Jackson administered the poison, and certainly not the young woman,’ she replied with vengeful promptness.

‘My own conviction! This, then, is my proposition: you are sharp-witted, and know this fellow’s ways, habits, and propensities thoroughly—I, too, have heard something of them—and it strikes me that you could suggest some plan, some device grounded on that knowledge, whereby the truth might come to light.’

The woman looked fixedly at me for some time without speaking. As I meant fairly and honestly by her I could bear her gaze without shrinking.

‘Supposing I could assist you,’ she at last said, ‘how would that help me?’

‘It would help you greatly. You would no doubt be still convicted of the burglary, for the evidence is irresistible; but if in the meantime you should have been instrumental in saving the life of an innocent person, and of bringing a great criminal to justice, there cannot be a question that the Queen’s mercy would be extended to you, and the punishment be merely a nominal one.’

‘If I were sure of that!’ she murmured with a burning scrutiny in her eyes, which were still fixed upon my countenance—‘if I were sure of that! But you are misleading me.’

‘Believe me, I am not. I speak in perfect sincerity. Take time to consider the matter. I will look in again in about an hour; and pray, do not forget that it is your sole and last chance.’

I left her, and did not return till more than three hours had passed away. Sarah Purday was pacing the cell in a frenzy of inquietude.

'I thought you had forgotten me. Now,' she continued with rapid vehemence, 'tell me, on your word and honour as a man, do you truly believe that if I can effectually assist you it will avail me with Her Majesty?'

'I am as positive it will as I am of my own life.'

'Well, then, I *will* assist you. First, then, Jackson was a confederate with Dawkins and myself, and received the plate and jewellery, for which he paid us less than one-third of the value.'

'Rogers and his wife were not, I hope, cognizant of this?'

'Certainly not; but Jackson's wife and the woman-servant Riddet were. I have been turning the other business over in my mind,' she continued, speaking with increasing emotion and rapidity; 'and oh, believe me, Mr Waters, if you can, that it is not solely a selfish motive which induces me to aid in saving Mary Rogers from destruction. I was once myself—— Ah!'

Tears welled up to the fierce eyes, but they were quickly brushed away, and she continued somewhat more calmly: 'You have heard, I daresay, that Jackson has a strange habit of talking in his sleep?'

'I have, and that he once consulted Morgan as to whether there was any cure for it. It was that which partly suggested'——

'It is, I believe, a mere fancy of his,' she interrupted; 'or at anyrate the habit is not so frequent, nor what he says so intelligible, as he thoroughly believes and fears it, from some former circumstance, to be. His deaf wife cannot undeceive him, and he takes care never even to doze except in her presence only.'

'This is not, then, so promising as I hoped.'

‘Have patience. It is full of promise, as we will manage. Every evening Jackson frequents a low gambling-house, where he almost invariably wins small sums at cards—by craft, no doubt, as he never drinks there. When he returns home at about ten o’clock, his constant habit is to go into the front-parlour, where his wife is sure to be sitting at that hour. He carefully locks the door, helps himself to brandy and water—plentifully of late—and falls asleep in his arm-chair; and there they both doze away, sometimes till one o’clock—always till past twelve.’

‘Well; but I do not see how’——

‘Hear me out, if you please. Jackson never wastes a candle to drink or sleep by, and at this time of the year there will be no fire. If he speaks to his wife he does not expect her, from her wooden deafness, to answer him. Do you begin to perceive my drift?’

‘Upon my word, I do not.’

‘What! if upon awaking, Jackson finds that his wife is Mrs. Waters, and that Mr Waters relates to him all that he has disclosed in his sleep: that Mr Hursley’s plate is buried in the garden near the lilac-tree; that he, Jackson, received a thousand pounds six weeks ago of Henry Rogers’s fortune, and that the money is now in the recess on the top-landing, the key of which is in his breast-pocket; that he was the receiver of the plate stolen from a house in the close at Salisbury a twelvemonth ago, and sold in London for four hundred and fifty pounds. All this hurled at him,’ continued the woman with wild energy and flashing eyes, ‘what else might not a bold, quick-witted man make him believe he had confessed, revealed in his brief sleep?’

I had been sitting on a bench; but as these rapid disclosures burst from her lips, and I saw the use to which they might be turned, I rose slowly and in some sort

involuntarily to my feet, lifted up, as it were, by the energy of her fiery words.

‘Heaven reward you!’ I exclaimed, shaking both her hands in mine. ‘You have, unless I blunder, rescued an innocent woman from the scaffold. I see it all. Farewell!’

‘Mr Waters,’ she exclaimed, in a changed, palpitating voice, as I was passing forth; ‘when all is done, you will not forget me?’

‘That I will not, by my own hopes of mercy in the hereafter. Adieu!’

At a quarter past nine that evening I, accompanied by two Farnham constables, knocked at the door of Jackson’s house. Henry Rogers, I should state, had been removed to the village. The door was opened by the woman-servant, and we went in. ‘I have a warrant for your arrest, *James Riddet*,’ I said, ‘as an accomplice in the plate-stealing the other day. There, don’t scream, but listen to me.’ I then intimated the terms upon which alone she could expect favour. She tremblingly promised compliance; and after placing the constables outside in concealment, but within hearing, I proceeded to the parlour, secured the terrified old woman, and confined her safely in a distant outhouse.

‘Now, Riddet,’ I said, ‘quick with one of the old lady’s gowns, a shawl, cap, &c.’ These were brought, and I returned to the parlour. It was a roomy apartment, with small diamond-paned windows, and just then but very faintly illumined by the starlight. There were two large high-backed easy-chairs, and I prepared to take possession of the one recently vacated by Jackson’s wife. ‘You must perfectly understand,’ were my parting words to the trembling servant, ‘that we intend standing no nonsense with either you or your master. You cannot escape; but if you let Mr Jackson in as usual, and he enters this room as

usual, no harm will befall you : if otherwise, you will be unquestionably transported. Now, go !'

My toilet was not so easily accomplished as I thought it would be. The gown did not meet at the back by about a foot ; that, however, was of little consequence, as the high chair concealed the deficiency ; neither did the shortness of the sleeves matter much, as the ample shawl could be made to hide my too great length of arm ; but the skirt was scarcely lower than a Highlander's kilt, and how I was to crook my booted legs up out of view, even in that gloomy starlight, I could hardly imagine. The cap also was far too small ; still, with an ample kerchief in my hand, my whiskers might, I thought, be concealed. I was still fidgeting with these arrangements when Jackson knocked at his door. The servant admitted him without remark, and he presently entered the room, carefully locked the door, and jolted down, so to speak, in the fellow easy-chair to mine.

He was silent for a few moments, and then he bawled out : ' She'll swing for it, they say—swing for it, d' ye hear, dame ? But no, of course she don't—deafener and deafener, deafener and deafener every day. It'll be a precious good job when the parson says his last prayers over her as well as others.'

He then got up, and went to a cupboard. I could hear—for I dared not look up—by the jingling of glasses and the outpouring of liquids that he was helping himself to his spirituous sleeping-draughts. He reseated himself, and drank in moody silence, except now and then mumbling drowsily to himself, but in so low a tone that I could make nothing out of it, save an occasional curse or blasphemy. It was nearly eleven o'clock before the muttered self-communing ceased, and his heavy head sank upon the back of the easy-chair. He was very restless, and it was evident

that even his sleeping brain laboured with affrighting and oppressive images; but the mutterings, as before he slept, were confused and indistinct. At length—half an hour had perhaps thus passed—the troubled moanings became for a few moments clearly audible. ‘Ha, ha, ha!’ he burst out, ‘how are you off for soap? Ho, ho! done there, my boy; ha, ha! But no—no! Wall-plaster! Who could have thought it! But for that I—I— What do you stare at me so for, you old blue-bottle? You—you’— Again the dream-utterance sank into indistinctness, and I comprehended nothing more.

About half-past twelve o’clock he awoke, rose, stretched himself, and said: ‘Come, dame, let’s to bed; it’s getting chilly here.’

‘Dame’ did not answer, and he again went towards the cupboard. ‘Here’s a candle-end will do for us,’ he muttered. A lucifer-match was drawn across the wall, he lit the candle, and stumbled towards me, for he was scarcely yet awake. ‘Come, dame, come! Why, thee beest sleeping like a dead un! Wake up, will thee— Ah! murder! thieves! mur’—

My grasp was on the wretch’s throat; but there was no occasion to use force: he recognised me, and nerveless, paralysed, sank on the floor incapable of motion, much less of resistance, and could only gaze in my face in dumb affright and horror.

‘Give me the key of the recess up-stairs, which you carry in your breast-pocket. In your sleep, unhappy man, you have revealed everything!’

An inarticulate shriek of terror replied to me. I was silent; and presently he gasped: ‘Wha—at, what have I said?’

‘That Mr Hursley’s plate is buried in the garden by the lilac-tree; that you have received a thousand pounds

belonging to the man you tried to poison ; that you netted four hundred and fifty pounds by the plate stolen at Salisbury ; that you dexterously contrived to slip the sulphuric acid into the tea, unseen by Henry Rogers's wife.'

The shriek or scream was repeated, and he was for several moments speechless with consternation. A ray of hope gleamed suddenly in his flaming eyes. 'It is true—it is true!' he hurriedly ejaculated ; 'useless—useless—useless to deny it ! But you are alone, and poor, poor, no doubt. A thousand pounds !—more, more than that : *two* thousand pounds in gold—gold, all in gold—I will give you to spare me, to let me escape !'

'Where did you hide the soap on the day when you confess you tried to poison Henry Rogers ?'

'In the recess you spoke of. But think ! Two thousand pounds in gold—all in gold'—

As he spoke I suddenly grasped the villain's hands, pressed them together, and in another instant the snapping of a handcuff pronounced my answer. A yell of anguish burst from the miserable man, so loud and piercing, that the constables outside hurried to the outer door, and knocked hastily for admittance. They were let in by the servant-woman ; and in half an hour afterwards the three prisoners—Jackson, his wife, and Jane Riddet—were safe in Farnham prison.

A few sentences will conclude this narrative. Mary Rogers was brought up on the following day, and on my evidence, discharged. Her husband, I have heard, has since proved a better and a wiser man. Jackson was convicted at the Guildford assize of guiltily receiving the Hursley plate, and sentenced to transportation for life. This being so, the graver charge of attempting to poison was not pressed. There was no moral doubt of his guilt ; but the legal proof of it rested solely on his own hurried

confession, which counsel would no doubt have contended ought not to be received. His wife and the servant were leniently dealt with.

Sarah Purday was convicted, and sentenced to transportation. I did not forget my promise; and a statement of the previously narrated circumstances having been drawn up and forwarded to the Queen and the Home Secretary, a pardon, after some delay, was issued. There were painful circumstances in her history which, after strict inquiry, told favourably for her. Several benevolent persons interested themselves in her behalf, and she was sent out to Canada, where she had some relatives, and has, I believe, prospered.

This affair caused considerable hubbub at the time, and much admiration was expressed by the country people at the boldness and dexterity of the London 'runner;' whereas, in fact, the successful result was entirely attributable to the opportune revelations of Sarah Purday.



THE PARTNER.



HAD virtually, though not formally left the force, when a young man of gentlemanly but somewhat dissipated aspect, and looking very pale and agitated, called upon me with a note from one of the Commissioners, enjoining me to assist the bearer, Mr Edmund Webster, to the utmost of my ability; if, upon examination, I saw reason to place reliance upon his statement relative to the painful and extraordinary circumstances in which he was involved.

‘Mr Edmund Webster,’ I exclaimed, after glancing at the note. ‘You are the person, then, accused of robbing Mr Hutton, the corn-merchant’ (the reader will of course understand that I make use of fictitious names), ‘and whom that gentleman refuses to prosecute?’

‘The same, Mr Waters. But although the disgraceful charge, so far as regards legal pursuit, appears to be withdrawn, or rather is not pressed, my family and I shall not be the less shamed and ruined thereby, unless my perfect innocence can be made manifest before the world. It is with that view we have been advised to seek your assistance; and my father desires me to say that he will hesitate

at no expense necessary for the thorough prosecution of the inquiry.'

'Very well, Mr Webster. The intimation of the Commissioner is, however, of itself all-potent with me, although I hoped to be concerned in no more such investigations. Have the goodness, therefore, to sit down and favour me minutely and distinctly with your version of the affair, omitting, if you please, no circumstance, however apparently trivial, in connection with it. I may tell you,' I added, opening the note-book from which I am now transcribing, and placing it before me in readiness to begin : 'I may tell you, by way of some slight encouragement, that the defence you volunteered at the police-office was, in my opinion, too improbable to be an invention ; and I, as you know, have had large experience in such matters. That also, I suspect, is Mr Hutton's opinion ; and hence not only his refusal to prosecute, but the expense and trouble he has been at, to my knowledge, in preventing either his own or your name from appearing in the papers. Now, sir, if you please.'

'I shall relate every circumstance, Mr Waters, as clearly and truthfully as possible, for my own sake, in order that you may not be working in the dark ; and first, I must beg your attention to one or two family matters, essential to a thorough appreciation of the position in which I am placed.'

'Go on, sir : it is my duty to hear all you have to say.'

'My father,' proceeded Mr Edmund Webster, 'who, as you are aware, resides in the Regent's Park, retired about five years ago from the business in Mark Lane, which has since been carried on by the former junior partner, Mr Hutton. Till within the last six months, I believed myself destined for the army, the purchase-money of a cornetcy having been lodged, at the Horse Guards a few days after I came of age. Suddenly, however, my father changed his mind,

insisted that I should become a partner of Hutton's in the corn-trade, and forthwith withdrew the money lodged for the commission. I am not even yet cognizant of all his motives for this seeming caprice ; but those he alleged were, first, my spendthrift, idle habits—an imputation for which, I confess, there was too much foundation ; though as to whether the discipline of the counting-house would, as he believed, effect a beneficial change, there might be two opinions. Another, and I have no doubt much more powerfully inducing motive with him was, that I had formed an attachment for Miss Ellen Bramston, the second daughter of Captain Bramston, of the East India Company's service, residing at Hampstead upon his half-pay. My father strongly disapproved of the proposed alliance : like most of the successful City men I have known or heard of, he more heartily despises poverty with a laced coat on its back than in rags ; and he knew no more effectual plan could be hit upon for frustrating my wishes than by transforming my expected cornetcy into a partnership in the corn-trade, my imaginary sword into an actual goose-quill ; Captain Bramston, who is distantly related to an earl, being even prouder than he is poor, and a man that would rather see his daughter in her coffin than married to a trader. "It was condescension enough," he angrily remarked, "that he had permitted Ellen Bramston to encourage the addresses of the son of a City parvenu, but it was utterly preposterous to suppose she could wed an actual corn-chandler."

'Corn-chandler !'

'That was Captain Bramston's pleasant phrase, when I informed him of my father's sudden change of purpose. The proposed partnership was as distasteful to myself as to Captain Bramston ; but my father proved inexorable—fiercely so, I may say—to my entreaties and those of my sisters ; and I was placed in the dilemma, either of name-

diate banishment from home and probable forfeiture of my inheritance, or the loss of Ellen Bramston, to whom, with all my follies, I was and am devotedly attached. After much anxious cogitation, I hit upon a scheme, requiring for a time the exercise of a considerable amount of deceit and dissimulation, which would, I flattered myself, ultimately reconcile interest with inclination; give me Ellen, and not lose my father.'

'To which deceit and dissimulation you are doubtless indebted for your present unfortunate position.'

'You have rightly anticipated. But to proceed. Mr Hutton himself, I must tell you, was strongly adverse to receiving me as a partner, though for some reason or other he durst not openly oppose the project; his son, John Hutton, also bitterly objected to it'——

'His son, John Hutton! I know the character of Hutton senior pretty well; pray what is that of his son?'

'Well, like myself, he is rather fast perhaps, but not the less a good sort of young fellow enough. He sailed the week before last for Riga, on business.'

'Before you were apprehended?'

'On the morning of the same day. Let me see, where was I? Oh—Mr Hutton's aversion to the partnership, the knowledge of which suggested my plan of operation. I induced him to represent to my father that I should pass at least two or three months in the counting-house before the matter was irreversibly concluded, for his, Mr Hutton's sake, in order that it might be ascertained if there was any possibility of taming me into habits of method and application; and I hypocritically enforced his argument—you see I am perfectly candid—by promising ultimate dutiful submission to my father's wishes, provided the final decision were thus respited. The main object I thought to obtain by this apparent compliance was the effectual loosening,

before many weeks had passed, of the old gentleman's purse-strings, which had of late been overtightly drawn. I had several pressing debts of honour as they are called—debts of dishonour would, according to my experience, be the apter phrase—which it was absolutely necessary to discharge; and the success, moreover, of my matrimonial project entirely depended upon my ability to secure a very considerable sum of money.'

'Your matrimonial project?'

'Yes: it was at last arranged, not without much reluctance on the part of Ellen, but I have good reason for believing with the covert approbation of Captain Bramston, that we should effect a stolen marriage, immediately set off for the continent, and remain there till the parental storm, which on my father's part would I knew be tremendous, had blown over. I did not feel much disquieted as to the final result. I was an only son; my sisters would be indefatigable intercessors; and we all, consequently, were pretty confident that a general reconciliation, such as usually accompanies the ringing down of the green curtain at the wind-up of a stage-comedy, would, after no great interval of time, take place. Money, however, was indispensable—money for the wedding expenses, the flight to France, and living there for a considerable time perhaps; and no likelier mode of obtaining it occurred to me than that of cajoling my father into good-humour by affecting to acquiesce in his wishes. And here I may remark in passing, that had I been capable of the infamous deed I am accused of, abundant opportunities of plundering Mr Hutton presented themselves from the first hour I entered his counting-house. Over and over again has he left me alone in his private room with the keys in the lock of his iron safe, where large sums were frequently deposited, not in bank-notes only, but untraceable gold.'

‘That looks like a singular want of caution in so precise and wary a man as Mr Hutton,’ I remarked, half under my breath.

‘Nothing of the sort,’ rejoined Mr Edmund Webster with some heat, and his pallid face brightly flushing. ‘It only shews that, with all my faults and follies, it was impossible for any one that knew me to imagine I could be capable of perpetrating a felony.’

‘I beg your pardon, Mr Webster;’ I meant nothing offensive to you: the remark was merely the partly involuntary expression of a thought which suddenly glanced across my mind.’

‘I have little more of preliminary detail to relate,’ he went on to say. ‘Contrary to our hope and expectation, my father became not a whit more liberal with his purse than before—the reverse rather; and I soon found that he intended to keep the screw on till the accomplishment of the hated partnership placed an insuperable bar between me and Ellen Brangston. I used to converse frequently upon these matters with Mr Hutton as unreservedly as I do now with you; and I must say that, although extremely anxious to avoid any appearance of opposition to my father, he always expressed the warmest sympathy with my aims and wishes; so much so, in fact, that I at last ventured to ask him for the loan of about five hundred pounds, that being the least sum which would enable me to pay off the most pressing of the claims by which I was harassed and carry out my wedding project. That favour, however, he flatly refused, under the plea that his having done so would sooner or later come to my father’s knowledge.’

‘And did Mr Hutton, after that refusal, continue to afford you opportunities of helping yourself, had you been so minded?’

‘Yes; unquestionably he did: but what of that?’

sharply replied the young man, his pale face again suffused with an angry flush.

‘Nothing, sir; nothing. Go on: I am all attention.’

‘Well, I made application to several money-lenders with the like ill success, till last Monday fortnight, when I was accosted at Mr Hutton’s place of business in the Corn-market, where I happened to be for a few minutes alone, by a respectable-looking middle-aged man, who asked me if I was the Mr Edmund Webster who had left a note at Mr Curtis’s of Bishopsgate Street, on the previous Saturday, requesting the loan of five hundred pounds upon my own acceptance at six months’ date. I eagerly replied in the affirmative; upon which Mr Brown, as the man called himself, asked if I had the promissory-note for five hundred and fifty pounds, as I had proposed, ready drawn; as if so, he would give me the cash at once. I answered in a flurry of joyous excitement, that I had not the note drawn nor a stamp with me, but if he would wait a few minutes till Mr Hutton or a clerk came in, I would get one and ~~wrote the~~ acceptance immediately. He hesitated for a moment, and then said: “I am in a hurry this morning, but I will wait for you in the coffee-room of the Bay-tree Tavern: have the kindness to be as quick as you can, and draw the note in favour of Mr Brown.” He had not been gone above three or ~~four~~ minutes, when a clerk came in. I instantly hurried to a stationer’s, wrote the note in his shop, and speeded on with it to the Bay-tree Tavern. The coffee-room was full, except the box where sat Mr Brown, who, after glancing at the acceptance, and putting it quickly up, placed a roll of notes in my hand. “Do not display your money,” he said, “before all these people. You can count the notes under the table.” I did so: they were quite correct—ten fifties; and I forthwith ordered a bottle of wine. Mr Brown, however, alleging business as an excuse, did not wait till it was

brought—bade me good-day, and disappeared, taking, in his hurry, my hat instead of his own.

‘I was, you will readily believe, exceedingly jubilant at this lucky turn of affairs ; and strange as it must appear to you, and does now to myself, it did not strike me at the time as at all extraordinary or unbusinesslike that I should have five hundred pounds suddenly placed in my hands by a man to whom I was personally unknown, and who could not, therefore, be certain that I was the Edmund Webster he professed to be in search of. What with the effect of the wine I drank and natural exultation, I was, I well remember, in a state of great excitement when I left the tavern, and hardly seemed to feel my feet as I hurried away to Mark Lane, to inform Mr Hutton of my good-luck, and bid his counting-house and the corn-trade a final farewell. He was not at home, and I went in and seated myself in his private room to await his return. I have no doubt that, as the clerk has since deposed, I *did* look flustered, agitated ; and it is quite true also, that after vainly waiting for upwards of an hour, I suddenly left the place, and as it happened, unnoticed by anybody. Immediately upon leaving Mark Lane, I hastened to Hampstead, saw Miss Bramston ; and as everything, with the exception of the money, had been for some time in readiness, it was soon decided that we should take wing at dawn, on the following morning, for Scotland, and thence pass over to France. I next betook myself to Regent’s Park, where I dined, and confided everything to my sisters except as to *how* I had obtained the necessary funds. At about eight in the evening, I took a cab as far as the Haymarket for the purpose of hiring a post-chaise-and-four and of paying a few debts of honour in that neighbourhood. I was personally unknown to the postmaster ; it was therefore necessary to prepay the chaise as far as St Albans, and I presented him with one of the

fifty-pound notes for that purpose. He did not appear surprised at the largeness of the sum, but requested me to place my name and address on the back of the note before he changed it. In my absurd anxiety to prevent the possibility of our flight being traced, I indorsed the note as "Charles Hart, Great Wimpole Street," and the man left the yard.

'He was gone a considerable time, and I was getting exceedingly impatient, when, to my surprise and consternation, he re-entered the yard accompanied by a police-officer. "You are the gentleman from whom Mr Evans received this fifty-pound note a few minutes ago—are you not?" "Yes, to be sure," I answered, stammering and colouring, why I scarcely knew. "Then step this way, if you please," said the man. "That note, with nine others of the same value, is advertised in the evening papers as having been stolen from a gentleman's counting-house in Mark Lane." I thought I should have fainted; and when a paragraph in the *Globe* was pointed out to me, offering a reward, on the part of Mr Hutton, for the apprehension of the person or persons who had that day stolen ten fifty-pound Bank-of-England notes—the dates and numbers of which were given—from his office, I was so completely stunned, that but for the police-officer I should have dropped upon the floor. "This perhaps may be cleared up," said the officer, "so far as you, Mr Hart, are concerned; and I will, if you like, go with you at once to your address in Great Wimpole Street." It was of course necessary to acknowledge that my name was not Hart, and that I had given a false address. This was enough. I was at once secured and taken off to the station-house, searched, and the other nine notes being found upon me, no doubt was entertained of my guilt. I obstinately declined giving my real name—very foolishly so, as I now perceive, since Mr Hutton's clerk, the moment

he saw me the next day at the police-court, disclosed it as a matter of course. The result you know. Mr Hutton, when he heard *who* it was that had been taken into custody, kept resolutely out of the way; and after several remands, I was set at liberty, the magistrate remarking, that he knew of no case which shewed in a more striking light the need of a public prosecutor in this country. My account of the way in which I became possessed of the notes was, as you know, scouted, and quite naturally; Mr Curtis of Bishopsgate Street having denied all knowledge of Mr Brown, or that he had commissioned any one to present me with five hundred pounds in exchange for my acceptance. Thus stigmatised and disgraced, I returned home to find my father struck down, in what was at first thought would prove mortal illness, by the blow—Captain Bramston's door shut against me—and the settled marriage of my eldest sister, Jane, with an amiable young man, peremptorily broken off by his relatives on account of the assumed criminality of her brother.'

'This is indeed a sad mysterious business, Mr Webster,' I remarked, when the young man had ceased speaking; 'but pray tell me, did either Mr Hutton or his son know of your application to Mr Curtis?'

'I cannot say that either of them did, though it is more than probable that I mentioned it to both of them.'

'Well, Mr Webster, I have confidence in your veracity; but it is essential that I should see your father before engaging in this business.'

'He is anxious you should do so, and as early as possible.'

It was then arranged that I should call on Webster senior at three o'clock the same afternoon, and announce myself to the servants as Mr Thompson. I was punctual to the time appointed, and was forthwith ushered by one of the daughters into her father's presence. He was not

yet sufficiently recovered to leave his bed; and I had hardly exchanged half-a-dozen sentences with him, when the same young lady by whom I had been introduced, hastily returned to say Mr Hutton was below, and requested an immediate interview. Mr Webster bade his daughter tell Mr Hutton he was engaged, and could not be interrupted; and she was turning away to do so, when I said hastily: 'Excuse me, Mr Webster, but I should exceedingly like to hear with my own ears what Mr Hutton has to say, unobserved by him.'

'You may do so with all my heart,' he replied; 'but how shall we manage to conceal you?'

'Easily enough under the bed;' and suiting the action to the word, I was in a moment out of sight. Miss Webster was then told to ask Mr Hutton to walk up, and in a few minutes that worthy gentleman entered the room. After a few hypocritical condolences upon the invalid's state of health, Mr Hutton came to the point at once, and with a vengeance.

'I am come, Mr Webster,' he began in a determined tone, 'to say that I will endure this shilly-shallying no longer. Either you give up the bonds you hold of mine for borrowed moneys'——

'Eleven thousand pounds and upwards!' groaned the sick man.

'About that sum, I am aware, including interest; in discharge of which load of debt I was, you know, to have given a third share of my business to your admirable son. Well, agree at once to cancel those bonds, else I forthwith prosecute your son, who will as certainly be convicted and transported for life.'

'I tell you again,' retorted the excited invalid, 'that I will not purchase mere forbearance to prosecute at the cost of a single shilling. The accusation would always be

hanging over his head, and we should remain for ever disgraced, as we are now, in the eyes of the world.'

'I have turned that over in my mind,' replied Hutton, 'and I think I can meet your wishes. Undertake to cancel the debt I owe you, and I will wait publicly to-morrow upon the magistrate with a letter in my hand purporting to be from my son, and stating that it was he who took the notes from my desk, and employed a man of the name of Brown to exchange them for your son's acceptance, he being anxious that Mr Edmund Webster should not become his father's partner; a purpose that would necessarily be frustrated if he, Edmund Webster, was enabled to marry and leave this country.'

There was no answer to this audacious proposal for a minute or two, and then Mr Webster said slowly: 'That my son is innocent, I am thoroughly convinced'——

'Innocent!' exclaimed Mr Hutton with savage derision. 'Have you taken leave of your senses?'

'Still,' continued the invalid, unmindful of the interruption, 'it might be impossible to prove him so; and your proposition has a certain plausibility about it. I must, however, have time to consider of it.'

'Certainly; let us say till this day week. You cannot choose but comply; for if you do not, as certainly as I stand here a living man, your son shall, immediately after the expiration of that time, be on the high-road to the hulks.' Having said this, Mr Hutton went away, and I emerged from my very undignified lurking-place.

'I begin to see a little clearer through this black affair,' I said in reply to the old gentleman's questioning look; 'and I trust we may yet be able to turn the tables upon the very confident gentleman who has just left us.—Now, if you please,' I added, addressing Miss Webster, who had again returned, 'I shall be glad of a few moments' conversation

with your brother.' She led the way down-stairs, and I found Mr Edmund Webster in the dining-room. 'Have the kindness,' I said, 'to let me see the hat Mr Brown left behind at the tavern in exchange for yours.' The young man seemed surprised at the apparent oddness of the request, but immediately complied with it. 'And pray, what maker or seller's name was pasted inside the crown of *your* hat, Mr Webster?'

'Lewis, of Bond Street,' he replied: 'I always purchase my hats there.'

'Very good. And now as to Mr Brown's personal appearance. What is he at all like?'

'A stoutish middle-aged man, with very light hair, prominent nose, and a pale face, considerably pock-marked.'

'That will do for the present, Mr Webster; and let me beg, that till you see me again, not a soul receives a hint that we are moving in this business.'

I then left the house. The hat had furnished an important piece of information, the printed label inside being 'Perkins, Guildford, Surrey;' and at the Rose and Crown Inn, Guildford, Surrey, I alighted the very next day at about two o'clock, in the strong hope of meeting in its steep streets or adjacent lanes with a stoutish gentleman, distinguished by very light hair, a long nose, and a white pock-marked face. The chance was, at all events, worth a trial; and I very diligently set to work to realise it, by walking about from dawn till dark, peering at every head I passed, and spending the evenings in the most frequented parlours of the town. Many a bootless chase I was led by a distant glimpse of light or red hair; and one fellow with a sandy poll and a pair of the longest legs I ever saw, kept me almost at a run for two mortal hours one sultry hot morning, on the road to Chertsey, before I headed him, and confronted a pair of fat cheeks, as round and red as an

apple, between which lay, scarcely visible, a short snub-nose. Patience and perseverance at length, however, met with their reward. I recognised my man as he was cheapening a joint of meat in the market-place. He answered precisely to the description given me, and wore, moreover, a fashionable hat, strongly suggestive of Bond Street. After a while he parted from his wife, and made towards a public-house, into the parlour of which I entered close after him. I had now leisure to observe him more closely. He appeared to be a respectable sort of man, but a care-worn expression flitted at times over his face, which to me, an adept in such signs, indicated with sufficient plainness much anxiety of mind, arising, probably, from pecuniary embarrassment, not I judged from a burdened conscience. I presently obtained further and decisive proof, though that was scarcely needed, that Mr Skinner, as the waiter called him, was my Mr Brown : in rising to leave the room, I took his hat, which he had hung up, in apparent mistake for my own, and in the half-minute that elapsed before I replaced it, saw plainly enough, 'Lewis, Bond Street, London,' on the inside label. The only question now was, how to best avail myself of the lucky turning up of Mr Brown; and whilst I was meditating several modes of action, the sight of a board, upon which was painted, 'This Ground to be let in Building Leases : Apply to Mr Skinner, Builder,' at once decided me. I called upon Mr Skinner, who lived about half a mile out of Guildford, the next morning, inquired as to the conditions of the said leases, walked with him over the ground in question, calculated together how much a handsome country-house would cost, and finally adjourned to the Rose and Crown to discuss the matter further over a bottle of wine. Skinner was as free a soul I found as ever liquor betrayed into indiscretion ; and I soon heard that he had lately been to London, and had a rich brother-in-law there of the name of Hutton, with other

less interesting particulars. This charming confidence he seemed to think required a return in kind, and after he had essayed half-a-dozen indirect questions, I came frankly out with : 'There's no occasion to beat about the bush, Mr Skinner : you wish to know who I am, and especially if I am able to pay for the fine house we have been talking of. Well, then, I am a money-dealer ; I lend cash sometimes on security.'

'A pawnbroker?' queried Mr Skinner doubtfully.

'Not exactly that : I oftener take persons in pledge than goods. What I mean by money-dealer is a man who discounts the signatures of fast men with good expectations, who don't mind paying handsomely in the end for present accommodation.'

'I understand : a bill-discounter?'

'Precisely. But come, drink, and pass the decanter.'

A gleam that shot out of the man's gray eyes strengthened a hope I had hardly dared entertain, that I was on the eve of a great success ; but the trout, it was clear, required to be cautiously played. Mr Skinner presently fell into a brown-study, which I did not interrupt, contenting myself with refilling his glass as fast as he mechanically emptied it.

'A bill-discounter,' said he at last, putting down his pipe, and turning towards me with a settled purpose in his look.

'Is amount and length of time to run of any consequence?'

'None whatever, if the parties are safe.'

'Cash down on the nail?'

'Cash down on the nail, *minus* of course the interest.'

'Of course. Well, then, Mr Thompson, I have a promissory-note signed by a Mr Edmund Webster of London, for five hundred and fifty pounds, at six months' date, which I should like to discount.'

'Webster of the Minorities?'

'No ; his father is a retired corn-merchant residing in the

Regent's Park. The bill's as safe as a Bank-of-England note.'

'I know the party. But why doesn't the rich brother-in-law you spoke of cash it for you?'

'Well,' replied Skinner, 'no doubt he would; but the fact is, there is a dispute between us about this very note. I owe him a goodish bit of money; and if he got it into his hands, he'd of course be for deducting the amount; and I've been obliged to put him off by pretending it was accidentally burned soon after I obtained it.'

'A queer story, my friend; but if the signature's genuine, I don't mind that, and you shall have the cash at once.'

'Here it is, then,' said Skinner, unclasping a stout leather pocket-book. 'I don't mind throwing back the odd fifty pounds.'

I eagerly grasped the precious document, glanced at it, saw it was all right, placed it in my pocket, and then suddenly changing my tone, and rising from the table, said: 'Now, then, Skinner, *alias* Brown, I have to inform you that I am a detective police-officer, and that you are my prisoner.'

'Police! prisoner!', shouted the astounded man, as he leaped to his feet: 'what are you talking of?'

'I will tell you. Your brother-in-law employed you to discount the note now in my possession. You did so, pretending to be a Mr Brown, the agent of a Mr Curtis; but the villainous sequel of the transaction—the charging young Mr Webster with having stolen the very fifty-pound notes you gave him in the coffee-room of the Bay-tree Tavern—I do not believe, thanks to Mr Hutton's success in suppressing the names in the police reports, you can be aware of.'

The bewildered man shook as with ague in every limb, and when I ceased speaking, protested earnestly that he

had had no evil design in complying with his brother-in-law's wishes.

'I am willing to think so,' I replied; 'but at all events, you must go with me to London—quietly were best.'

To this he at last, though very reluctantly, consented; and half an hour afterwards we were in the train and on our road to London.

The next morning Mr Webster's solicitors applied to Mr Hutton for the immediate liquidation of the bonds held by their client. This, as we had calculated, rendered him furious; and Edmund Webster was again arrested on the former charge, and taken to the Marlborough Street Police-office, where his father, Captain Bramston, and other friends, impatiently awaited his appearance. Mr Hutton this time appeared as prosecutor, and deposed to the safe custody of the notes on the morning of the robbery.

'And you swear,' said Mr Webster's solicitor, 'that you did not with your own hands give the pretendedly stolen notes to Brown, and request him to take them in Mr Curtis's name to young Mr Webster?'

Hutton, greatly startled, glanced keenly in the questioner's face, and did not immediately answer. 'No, I did not,' he at last replied in a low, shaking voice.

'Let me refresh your memory. Did you not say to Brown, or rather Skinner, your brother-in-law'——

A slight scream escaped the quivering lips of the detected conspirator, and a blaze of frenzied anguish and alarm swept over his countenance, leaving it as white as marble. No further answer could be obtained from him; and as soon as possible he left the office, followed by the groans and hisses of the excited auditory. Skinner was then brought forward: he made a full and ample confession, and Edmund Webster was at once discharged, amidst the warm felicitations of the magistrate and the uproarious gratulations of his friends.

It was intended to indict Mr Hutton for perjury ; but the unhappy man chose to appear before a higher tribunal than that of the Old Bailey. He was found dead in his bedroom early the next morning. His affairs were found to be in a state of insolvency, though the deficit was not large ; fifteen shillings in the pound having been, I understood, ultimately paid to the creditors. Miss Ellen Bramston, I must not in conclusion omit to state, became Mrs Edmund Webster shortly after the triumphant vindication of her lover's character ; and, I believe, Miss Webster was made a wife on the same day.



GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY?

 FEW weeks after the lucky termination of the Sandford affair, I was engaged in the investigation of a remarkable case of burglary, accompanied by homicide, which had just occurred at the residence of Mr Bagshawe, a gentleman of competent fortune, situated within a few miles of Kendal in Westmoreland. The particulars forwarded to the London police authorities by the local magistracy were chiefly these :

Mr Bagshawe, who had been some time absent at Leamington, Warwickshire, with his entire establishment, wrote to Sarah King—a young woman left in charge of the house and property—to announce his own speedy return, and at the same time directing her to have a particular bedroom aired, and other household matters arranged for the reception of his nephew, Mr Robert Bristowe, who, having just arrived from abroad, would, he expected, leave London immediately for Five Oaks House. The positive arrival of this nephew had been declared to several tradesmen of Kendal by King early in the day preceding the night of the murder and

robbery ; and by her directions butcher-meat, poultry, fish, and so on had been sent by them to Five Oaks for his table. The lad who carried the fish home stated that he had seen a strange young gentleman in one of the sitting-rooms on the ground-floor through the half-opened door of the apartment. On the following morning it was discovered that Five Oaks House had been, not indeed broken *into*, but broken *out of*—this was evident from the state of the door fastenings—and the servant-woman barbarously murdered. The neighbours found her lying quite dead and cold at the foot of the principal staircase, clothed only in her night-gown and stockings, and with a flat chamber candlestick tightly grasped in her right hand. It was conjectured that she had been roused from sleep by some noise below, and having descended to ascertain the cause, had been mercilessly slain by the disturbed burglars.

Mr Bagshawe arrived on the following day, and it was then found that not only a large amount of plate, but between three and four thousand pounds in gold and notes—the produce of government stock sold out about two months previously—had been carried off. The only person, except his niece, who lived with him, that knew there was this sum in the house, was his nephew Robert Bristowe, to whom he had written, directing his letter to the Hummums Hotel, London, stating that the sum for the long-contemplated purchase of Rylands had been some time lying idle at Five Oaks, as he had wished to consult him upon his bargain before finally concluding it. This Mr Robert Bristowe was now nowhere to be seen or heard of ; and what seemed to confirm beyond a doubt the—to Mr Bagshawe and his niece—torturing, horrifying suspicion that this nephew was the burglar and assassin, a portion of the identical letter written to him by his uncle was found in one of the offices ! As he was nowhere to be

met with or heard of in the neighbourhood of Kendal, it was surmised that he must have returned to London with his booty; and a full description of his person, and the dress he wore, as given by the fishmonger's boy, was sent to London by the authorities. They also forwarded for our use and assistance one Josiah Barnes, a sly, sharp, vagabond-sort of fellow, who had been apprehended on suspicion, chiefly, or rather wholly, because of his former intimacy with the unfortunate Sarah King, who had discarded him, it seemed, on account of his incorrigibly idle, and in other respects disreputable habits. The *alibi* he set up was, however, so clear and decisive, that he was but a few hours in custody; and he now exhibited great zeal for the discovery of the murderer of the woman to whom he had, to the extent of his perverted instincts, been sincerely attached. He fiddled at the festivals of the humbler Kendalese; sang, tumbled, ventriloquised at their tavern orgies; and had he not been so very highly gifted, might, there was little doubt, have earned a decent living as a carpenter, to which profession his father, by dint of much exertion, had about half-bred him. His principal use to us was, that he was acquainted with the features of Mr Robert Bristowe; and accordingly, as soon as I had received my commission and instructions, I started off with him to the Hummums Hotel, Covent Garden. In answer to my inquiries, it was stated that Mr Robert Bristowe had left the hotel a week previously without settling his bill—which was, however, of very small amount, as he usually paid every evening—and had not since been heard of; neither had he taken his luggage with him. This was odd, though the period stated would have given him ample time to reach Westmoreland on the day it was stated he *had* arrived there.

‘What dress did he wear when he left?’

‘That which he usually wore: a foraging-cap with a gold

band, a blue military surtout coat, light trousers, and Wellington boots.'

The precise dress described by the fishmonger's errand-boy! We next proceeded to the Bank of England, to ascertain if any of the stolen notes had been presented for payment. I handed in a list of the numbers furnished by Mr Bagshawe, and was politely informed that they had all been cashed early the day before by a gentleman in a sort of undress uniform, and wearing a foraging-cap. Lieutenant James was the name indorsed upon them; and the address, Harley Street, Cavendish Square, was of course a fictitious one. The cashier doubted if he should be able to swear to the person of the gentleman who changed the notes, but he had particularly noticed his dress. I returned to Scotland Yard to report *no* progress; and it was then determined to issue bills descriptive of Bristowe's person, and offering a considerable reward for his apprehension, on such information as might lead to it; but the order had scarcely been issued, when who should we see walking deliberately down the yard towards the police-office but Mr Robert Bristowe himself, dressed precisely as before described! I had just time to caution the inspector not to betray any suspicion, but to hear his story and let him quietly depart, and to slip with Josiah Barnes out of sight, when he entered, and made a formal but most confused complaint of having been robbed something more than a week previously—where or by whom he knew not—and afterwards deceived, bamboozled, and led astray in his pursuit of the robbers, by a person whom he now suspected to be a confederate with them. Even of this latter personage he could afford no tangible information; and the inspector, having quietly listened to his statement—intended, doubtless, as a mystification—told him the police should make inquiries, and wished him good-morning. As soon as he had turned out

of Scotland Yard by the street leading to the Strand, I was upon his track. He walked slowly on, but without pausing, till he reached the Saracen's Head, Snow-Hill, where, to my great astonishment, he booked himself for Westmoreland by the night-coach. He then walked into the inn, and seating himself in the coffee-room, called for a pint of sherry wine and some biscuits. He was now safe for a short period at anyrate; and I was about to take a turn in the street, just to meditate upon the most advisable course of action, when I espied three buckishly-attired, bold-faced looking fellows one of whom I thought I recognised, spite of his fine dress—enter the booking-office. Naturally anxious in my vocation, I approached as closely to the door as I could without being observed, and heard one of them—my acquaintance sure enough; I could not be deceived in that voice—ask the clerk if there were any vacant places in the night coach to Westmoreland. To Westmoreland! Why, what in the name of Mercury could a detachment of the swell-mob be wanting in that country of furze and frieze-coats?" The next sentence uttered by my friend, as he placed the money for booking three insides to Kendal on the counter was equally, or perhaps more puzzling: 'Is the gentleman who entered the office just now—him with a foraging-cap I mean—to be our fellow-passenger?'

'Yes he has booked himself; and has, I think, since gone into the house.'

'Thank you: good-morning.'

I had barely time to slip aside into one of the passages, when the three gentlemen came out of the office, passed me, and swaggered out of the yard. Vague undefined suspicions at once beset me relative to the connection of these worthies with the 'foraging-cap' and the doings at Kendal. There was evidently something in all this more than natural, if police philosophy could but find it out. I resolved at all

events to try; and in order to have a chance of doing so, I determined to be of the party, nothing doubting that I should be able, in some way or other, to make one in whatever game they intended playing. I in my turn entered the booking-office, and finding there were still two places vacant, secured them both for James Jenkins and Josiah Barnes, countrymen and friends of mine returning to the 'north countrie.'

I returned to the coffee-room, where Mr Bristowe was still seated, apparently in deep and anxious meditation, and wrote a note, with which I despatched the inn porter. I had now ample leisure for observing the suspected burglar and assassin. He was a pale, intellectual-looking, and withal handsome young man, of about six-and-twenty years of age, of slight but well-knit frame, and with the decided air—travel-stained and jaded as he appeared—of a gentleman. His look was troubled and careworn, but I sought in vain for any indication of the starting nervous tremor always in my experience exhibited by even old practitioners in crime when suddenly accosted. Several persons had entered the room hastily, without causing him even to look up. I determined to try an experiment on his nerves, which I was quite satisfied no man who had recently committed a murder, and but the day before changed part of the produce of that crime into gold at the Bank of England, could endure without wincing. My object was, not to procure evidence producible in a court of law by such means, but to satisfy my own mind. I felt a growing conviction that, spite of appearances, the young man was guiltless of the deed imputed to him, and might be the victim, I could not help thinking, either of some strange combination of circumstances, or, more likely, of a diabolical plot for his destruction, essential, possibly, to the safety of the real perpetrators of the crime; very probably—so ran my sus-

picious—friends and acquaintances of the three gentlemen who were to be our fellow-travellers. My duty, I knew, was quite as much the vindication of innocence as the detection of guilt; and if I could satisfy myself that he was not the guilty party, no effort of mine should be wanting, I determined, to extricate him from the perilous position in which he stood. I went out of the room, and remained absent for some time; then suddenly entered with a sort of bounce, walked swiftly, and with a determined air, straight up to the box where he was seated, grasped him tightly by the arm, and exclaimed roughly, ‘So I have found you at last!’ There was no start, no indication of fear whatever—not the slightest; the expression of his countenance, as he peevishly replied, ‘What the devil do you mean?’ was simply one of surprise and annoyance.

‘I beg your pardon,’ I replied; ‘the waiter told me a friend of mine, one *Bagshawe*, who has given me the slip, was here, and I mistook you for him.’

He courteously accepted my apology, quietly remarking at the same time that though his own name was *Bristowe*, he had, oddly enough, an uncle in the country of the same name as the person I had mistaken him for. Surely, thought I, this man is guiltless of the crime imputed to him; and yet— At this moment the porter entered to announce the arrival of the gentleman I had sent for. I went out, and after giving the new-comer instructions not to lose sight of Mr *Bristowe*, hastened home to make arrangements for the journey.

Transformed, by the aid of a flaxen wig, broad-brimmed hat, green spectacles, and a multiplicity of waistcoats and shawls, into a heavy and elderly, well-to-do personage, I took my way with *Josiah Barnes*—whom I had previously thoroughly drilled as to speech and behaviour towards our companions—to the *Saracen’s Head* a few minutes previous

to the time for starting. We found Mr Bristowe already seated ; but the 'three friends,' I observed, were curiously looking on, desirous no doubt of ascertaining *who* were to be their fellow-travellers before venturing to coop themselves up in a space so narrow, and, under certain circumstances, so difficult of egress. My appearance and that of Barnes—who, sooth to say, looked much more of a simpleton than he really was—quite reassured them, and in they jumped with confident alacrity. A few minutes afterwards the 'All right' of the attending hostlers gave the signal for departure, and away we started.

A more silent, less social party I never assisted at. Whatever amount of 'feast of reason' each or either of us might have silently enjoyed, not a drop of 'flow of soul' welled up from one of the six insides. Every passenger seemed to have his own peculiar reasons for declining to display himself in either mental or physical prominence. Only one or two incidents—apparently unimportant, but which I carefully noted down in the tablet of my memory—occurred during the long, wearisome journey, till we stopped to dine at about thirty miles from Kendal ; when I ascertained, from an overheard conversation of one of the three with the coachman, that they intended to get down at a roadside tavern more than six miles on this side of that place.

'Do you know this house they intend to stop at?' I inquired of my assistant as soon as I got him out of sight and hearing at the back of the premises.

'Quite well: it is within about two miles of Five Oaks House.'

'Indeed! Then you must stop there too. It is necessary I should go on to Kendal with Mr Bristowe; but you can remain and watch their proceedings.'

'With all my heart.'

'But what excuse can you make for remaining there,

when they know you are booked for Kendal? Fellows of that stamp are keenly suspicious; and in order to be useful, you must be entirely unsuspected.'

'Oh, leave that to me. I'll throw dust enough in their eyes to blind a hundred such as they, I warrant ye.'

'Well, we shall see. And now to dinner.'

Soon after the coach had once more started, Mr Josiah Barnes began drinking from a stone bottle which he drew from his pocket; and so potent must have been the spirit it contained, that he became rapidly intoxicated. Not only speech, but eyes, body, arms, legs, the entire animal, by the time we reached the inn where we had agreed he should stop, was thoroughly, hopelessly drunk; and so savagely quarrelsome, too, did he become, that I expected every instant to hear my real vocation pointed out for the edification of the company. Strange to say, utterly stupid and savage as he seemed, all dangerous topics were carefully avoided. When the coach stopped, he got out—how, I know not—and reeled and tumbled into the tap-room, from which he declared he would not budge an-inch till next day. Vainly did the coachman remonstrate with him upon his foolish obstinacy; he might as well have argued with a bear; and he at length determined to leave him to his drunken humour. I was out of patience with the fellow; and snatching an opportunity when the room was clear, began to upbraid him for his vexatious folly. He looked sharply round, and then, his body as evenly balanced, his eye as clear, his speech as free as my own, crowed out in a low exulting voice: 'Didn't I tell you I'd manage it nicely?' The door opened, and, in a twinkling, extremity of drunkenness, of both brain and limb, was again assumed with a perfection of acting I have never seen equalled. He had studied from nature; that was perfectly clear. I was quite satisfied, and with renewed confidence obeyed the coachman's call to take my seat. Mr

Bristowe and I were now the only inside passengers ; and as further disguise was useless, I began stripping myself of my superabundant clothing, wig, spectacles, &c. ; and in a few minutes, with the help of a bundle I had with me, presented to the astonished gaze of my fellow-traveller the identical person that had so rudely accosted him in the coffee-room of the Saracen's Head inn.

'Why, what, in the name of all that's comical, is the meaning of this?' demanded Mr Bristowe, laughing immoderately at my changed appearance.

I briefly and coolly informed him ; and he was for some minutes overwhelmed with consternation and astonishment. He had not, he said, even heard of the catastrophe at his uncle's. Still, amazed and bewildered as he was, no sign which I could interpret into an indication of guilt escaped him.

'I do not wish to obtrude upon your confidence, Mr Bristowe,' I remarked, after a long pause ; 'but you must perceive that unless the circumstances I have related to you are in some way explained, you stand in a perilous predicament.'

'You are right,' he replied, after some hesitation. '*It is* a tangled web ; still, I doubt not that some mode of vindicating my perfect innocence will present itself.'

He then relapsed into silence ; and neither of us spoke again till the coach stopped, in accordance with a previous intimation I had given the coachman, opposite the gate of the Kendal prison. Mr Bristowe started, and changed colour, but instantly mastering his emotion, he calmly said : 'You of course but perform your duty ; mine is not to distrust a just and all-seeing Providence.'

We entered the jail, and the necessary search of his clothes and luggage was effected as forbearingly as possible. To my great dismay we found amongst the money in his

purse a Spanish gold piece of a peculiar coinage, and in the lining of his portmanteau, very dexterously hidden, a cross set with brilliants; both of which I knew, by the list forwarded to the London police, formed part of the plunder carried off from Five Oaks House. The prisoner's vehement protestations that he could not conceive how such articles came into his possession, excited a derisive smile on the face of the veteran turnkey; whilst I was thoroughly dumfounded by the seemingly complete demolition of the theory of innocence I had woven out of his candid open manner and unshakable hardihood of nerve.

'I daresay the articles came to you in your sleep!' sneered the turnkey as we turned to leave the cell.

'Oh,' I mechanically exclaimed, 'in his sleep! I had not thought of that!' The man stared; but I had passed out of the prison before he could express his surprise or contempt in words.

The next morning the justice-room was densely crowded to hear the examination of the prisoner. There was also a very numerous attendance of magistrates; the case, from the position in life of the prisoner, and the strange and mysterious circumstances of the affair altogether, having excited an extraordinary and extremely painful interest amongst all classes in the town and neighbourhood. The demeanour of the accused gentleman was anxious certainly, but withal calm and collected; and there was, I thought, a light of fortitude and conscious probity in his clear bold eyes, which guilt never yet successfully simulated.

After the hearing of some minor evidence, the fish-monger's boy was called, and asked if he could point out the person he had seen at Five Oaks on the day preceding the burglary. The lad looked fixedly at the prisoner for something more than a minute without speaking, and then said: 'The gentleman was standing before the fire when I

saw him, with his cap on ; I should like to see this person with his cap on before I say anything.' Mr Bristowe dashed on his foraging-cap, and the boy immediately exclaimed : 'That is the man !' Mr Cowan, a solicitor, retained by Mr Bagshawe for his nephew, objected that this was, after all, only swearing to a cap, or at best to the *ensemble* of a dress, and ought not to be received. The chairman, however, decided that it must be taken *quantum valeat*, and in corroboration of other evidence. It was next deposed by several persons that the deceased Sarah King had told them that her master's nephew had positively arrived at Five Oaks. An objection to the reception of this evidence, as partaking of the nature of 'hearsay,' was also made, and similarly overruled. Mr Bristowe begged to observe 'that Sarah King was not one of his uncle's old servants, and was entirely unknown to him : it was quite possible, therefore, that he was personally unknown to her.' The bench observed that all these observations might be fitly urged before a jury, but, in the present stage of the proceedings, were uselessly addressed to them, whose sole duty it was to ascertain if a sufficiently strong case of suspicion had been made out against the prisoner to justify his committal for trial. A constable next proved finding a portion of a letter, which he produced, in one of the offices of Five Oaks ; and then Mr Bagshawe was directed to be called in. The prisoner, upon hearing this order given, exhibited great emotion, and earnestly entreated that his uncle and himself might be spared the necessity of meeting each other for the first time after a separation of several years under such circumstances.

'We can receive no evidence against you, Mr Bristowe, in your absence,' replied the chairman in a compassionate tone of voice ; 'but your uncle's deposition will occupy but a few minutes. It is, however, indispensable.'

‘At least, then, Mr Cowan,’ said the agitated young man, ‘prevent my sister from accompanying her uncle : I could not bear *that*.’

He was assured she would not be present ; in fact she had become seriously ill through anxiety and terror ; and the crowded assemblage awaited in painful silence the approach of the reluctant prosecutor. He presently appeared—a venerable, white-haired man ; seventy years old at least he seemed, his form bowed by age and grief, his eyes fixed upon the ground, and his whole manner indicative of sorrow and dejection. ‘Uncle!’ cried the prisoner, springing towards him. The aged man looked up, seemed to read in the clear countenance of his nephew a full refutation of the suspicions entertained against him, tottered forwards with outspread arms, and, in the words of the Sacred text, ‘fell upon his neck and wept,’ exclaiming in choking accents : ‘Forgive me—forgive me, Robert, that I ever for a moment doubted you. Mary never did—never, Robert ; not for an instant.’

A profound silence prevailed during this outburst of feeling, and a considerable pause ensued before the usher of the court, at a gesture from the chairman, touched Mr Bagshawe’s arm, and begged his attention to the bench. ‘Certainly, certainly,’ said he, hastily wiping his eyes, and turning towards the court. ‘My sister’s child, gentlemen,’ he added appealingly, ‘who has lived with me from childhood : you will excuse me, I am sure.’

‘There needs no excuse, Mr Bagshawe,’ said the chairman kindly ; ‘but it is necessary this unhappy business should be proceeded with.—Hand the witness the portion of the letter found at Five Oaks.—Now, is that your handwriting ; and is it a portion of the letter you sent to your nephew, informing him of the large sum of money kept for a particular purpose at Five Oaks ?’

‘It is.’

‘Now,’ said the clerk to the magistrates, addressing me, ‘please to produce the articles in your possession.’

I laid the Spanish coin and the cross upon the table.

‘Please to look at those two articles, Mr Bagshawe,’ said the chairman. ‘Now, sir, on your oath, are they a portion of the property of which you have been robbed?’

The aged gentleman stooped forward and examined them earnestly; then turned and looked with quivering eyes, if I may be allowed the expression, in his nephew’s face, but returned no answer to the question.

‘It is necessary you should reply Yes or No, Mr Bagshawe,’ said the clerk.

‘Answer, uncle,’ said the prisoner soothingly: ‘fear not for me. God and my innocence to aid, I shall yet break through the web of villainy in which I at present seem hopelessly involved.’

‘Bless you, Robert—bless you! I am sure you will—Yes, gentlemen, the cross and coin on the table are part of the property carried off.’

A smothered groan, indicative of the sorrowing sympathy felt for the venerable gentleman, arose from the crowded court on hearing this declaration. I then deposed to finding them as previously stated. As soon as I concluded, the magistrates consulted together for a few minutes; and then the chairman, addressing the prisoner, said: ‘I have to inform you that the bench are agreed that sufficient evidence has been adduced against you to warrant them in fully committing you for trial. We are of course bound to hear anything you have to say; but such being our intention, your professional adviser will perhaps recommend you to reserve whatever defence you have to make for another tribunal: here it could not avail you.’

Mr Cowan expressed his concurrence in the intimation

of the magistrate; but the prisoner vehemently protested against sanctioning by his silence the accusation preferred against him.

‘I have nothing to reserve,’ he exclaimed with passionate energy; ‘nothing to conceal. I will not owe my acquittal of this foul charge to any trick of lawyer-craft. If I may not come out of this investigation with an untainted name, I desire not to escape at all. The defence, or rather the suggestive facts I have to offer for the consideration of the bench are these: On the evening of the day I received my uncle’s letter I went to Drury Lane Theatre, remaining out very late. On my return to the hotel, I found I had been robbed of my pocket-book, which contained not only that letter and a considerable sum in bank-notes, but papers of great professional importance to me. It was too late to adopt any measures for its recovery that night; and the next morning, as I was dressing myself to go out, in order to apprise the police authorities of my loss, I was informed that a gentleman desired to see me instantly on important business. He was shewn up, and announced himself to be a detective police-officer: the robbery I had sustained had been revealed by an accomplice, and it was necessary I should immediately accompany him. We left the hotel together; and after consuming the entire day in perambulating all sorts of by-streets, and calling at several suspicious-looking places, my officious friend all at once discovered that the thieves had left town for the west of England, hoping, doubtless, to reach a large town, and get gold for the notes before the news of their having been stopped should have reached it. He insisted upon immediate pursuit. I wished to return to the hotel for a change of clothes, as I was but lightly clad, and night-travelling required warmer apparel. This he would not hear of, as the night coach was on the point of starting. He, however, contrived to supply me

from his own resources with a greatcoat—a sort of policeman's cape—and a rough travelling-cap, which tied under the chin. In due time we arrived at Bristol, where I was kept for several days loitering about; till, finally, my guide decamped, and I returned to London. An hour after arriving there, I gave information at Scotland Yard of what had happened, and afterwards booked myself by the night coach for Kendal. This is all I have to say.'

This strange story did not produce the slightest effect upon the bench, and very little upon the auditory, and yet I felt satisfied it was strictly true. It was not half ingenious enough for a made-up story. Mr Bagshawe, I should have stated, had been led out of the justice-hall immediately after he had finished his deposition.

'Then Mr Bristowe,' said the magistrate's clerk, 'assuming this curious narrative to be correct, you will be easily able to prove an *alibi* ?'

'I have thought over that, Mr Clerk,' returned the prisoner mildly, 'and must confess that, remembering how I was dressed and wrapped up—that I saw but few persons, and those casually and briefly, I have strong misgivings of my power to do so.'

'That is perhaps the less to be lamented,' replied the county clerk in a sneering tone, 'inasmuch as the possession of those articles,' pointing to the cross and coin on the table, 'would necessitate another equally probable though quite different story.'

'That is a circumstance,' replied the prisoner in the same calm tone as before, 'which I cannot in the slightest manner account for.'

No more was said, and the order for his committal to the county jail at Appleby on the charge of 'wilful murder' was given to the clerk. At this moment a hastily scrawled note from Barnes was placed in my hands. I had no

sooner glanced over it, than I applied to the magistrates for an adjournment till the morrow, on the ground that I could then produce an important witness, whose evidence at the trial it was necessary to assure. The application was, as a matter of course, complied with; the prisoner was remanded till the next day, and the court adjourned.

As I accompanied Mr Bristowe to the vehicle in waiting to reconvey him to jail, I could not forbear whispering: 'Be of good heart, sir; we shall unravel this mystery yet, depend upon it.' He looked keenly at me; and then without other reply than a warm pressure of the hand, jumped into the carriage.

'Well, Barnes,' I exclaimed as soon as we were in a room by ourselves and the door closed, 'what is it you have discovered?'

'That the murderers of Sarah King are yonder at the Talbot where you left me.'

'Yes; so I gather from your note. But what evidence have you to support your assertion?'

'This! Trusting to my apparent drunken imbecility, they occasionally dropped words in my presence which convinced me not only that they were the guilty parties, but that they had come down here to carry off the plate, somewhere concealed in the neighbourhood. This they mean to do to-night.'

'Anything more?'

'Yes. You know I am a ventriloquist in a small way, as well as a bit of a mimic: well, I took occasion when that youngest of the rascals—the one that sat beside Mr Bristowe, and got out on the top of the coach the second evening, because, freezing cold as it was, he said the inside was too hot and close'—

'Oh, I remember. Dolt that I was, not to recall it before! But go on.'

‘Well, he and I were alone together in the parlour about three hours ago—I dead tipsy as ever—when he suddenly heard the voice of Sarah King at his elbow exclaiming: “Who is that in the plate closet?” If you had seen the start of horror which he gave, the terror which shook his failing limbs as he glanced round the apartment, you would no longer have entertained a doubt on the matter.’

‘This is scarcely judicial proof, Barnes; but I daresay we shall be able to make something of it. You return immediately; about nightfall I will rejoin you in my former disguise.’

It was early in the evening when I entered the Talbot and seated myself in the parlour. Our three friends were present, and so was Barnes.

‘Is not that fellow sober yet?’ I demanded of one of them.

‘No; he has been lying about drinking and snoring ever since. He went to bed, I hear, this afternoon; but he appears to be little the better for it.’

I had an opportunity soon afterwards of speaking to Barnes privately, and found that one of the fellows had brought a chaise-cart and horse from Kendal, and that all three were to depart in about an hour, under pretence of reaching a town about fourteen miles distant, where they intended to sleep. My plan was immediately taken. I returned to the parlour, and watching my opportunity, whispered into the ear of the young gentleman whose nerves had been so shaken by Barnes’ ventriloquism, and who, by the way, was *my* old acquaintance: ‘Dick Staples, I want a word with you in the next room.’ I spoke in my natural voice, and lifted, for his especial study and edification, the wig from my forehead. He was thunder-struck; and his teeth chattered with terror. His two companions were absorbed over a low game at cards, and did not

observe us. 'Come!' I continued in the same whisper; 'there is not a moment to lose: *if you would save yourself, follow me!*' He did so, and I led him into an adjoining apartment, closed the door, and drawing a pistol from my coat-pocket, said: 'You perceive, Staples, that the game is up: you personated Mr Bristowe at his uncle's house at Five Oaks, dressed in a precisely similar suit of clothes to that which he wears. You murdered the servant'——

'No—no—no, not I,' gasped the wretch; 'not I: I did not strike her'——

'At all events you were present, and that, as far as the gallows is concerned, is the same thing. You also picked that gentleman's pocket during our journey from London, and placed one of the stolen Spanish pieces in his purse; you then went on the roof of the coach, and by some ingenious means or other contrived to secrete a cross set with brilliants in his portmanteau.'

'What shall I do?—what shall I do?' screamed the fellow, half dead with fear, and slipping down on a chair; 'what shall I do to save my life—my life?'

'First get up and listen. If you are not the actual murderer'——

'I am not—upon my soul I am not!'

'If you are not, you will probably be admitted king's evidence; though, mind, I make no promises. Now, what is the plan of operations for carrying off the booty?'

'They are going in the chaise-cart almost immediately to take it up: it is hidden in the copse yonder. I am to remain here, in order to give an alarm should any suspicion be excited, by shewing two candles at our bedroom window; and if all keeps right, I am to join them at the cross-roads, about a quarter of a mile from hence.'

'All right. Now return to the parlour: I will follow

you : and remember that on the slightest hint of treachery I will shoot you as I would a dog.'

About a quarter of an hour afterwards his two confederates set off in the chaise-cart ; I, Barnes, and Staples, cautiously followed, the last handcuffed, and superintended by the hostler of the inn, whom I for the nonce pressed into the king's service. The night was pitch-dark fortunately, and the noise of the cart-wheels effectually drowned the sound of our footsteps. At length the cart stopped ; the men got out, and were soon busily engaged in transferring the buried plate to the cart. We cautiously approached, and were soon within a yard or two of them, still unperceived.

'Get into the cart,' said one of them to the other, 'and I will hand the things up to you.' His companion obeyed.

'Hollo !' cried the fellow, 'I thought I told you'——

'That you are nabbed at last !' I exclaimed, tripping him suddenly up.—'Barnes, hold the horse's head.—Now, sir, attempt to budge an inch out of that cart, and I'll send a bullet through your brains.' The surprise was complete ; and so terror-stricken were they, that neither resistance nor escape was attempted. They were soon handcuffed and otherwise secured ; the remainder of the plate was placed in the cart ; and we made the best of our way to Kendal jail, where I had the honour of lodging them at about nine o'clock in the evening. The news, late as it was, spread like wild-fire, and innumerable were the congratulations which awaited me when I reached the inn where I lodged. But that which recompensed me a thousandfold for what I had done, was the fervent embrace in which the white-haired uncle, risen from his bed to assure himself of the truth of the news, locked me, as he called down blessings from Heaven upon my

head! There are blessed moments even in the life of a police-officer.

Mr Bristowe was of course liberated on the following morning; Staples was admitted king's evidence; and one of his accomplices—the actual murderer—was hanged, the other transported. A considerable portion of the property was also recovered. The gentleman who—to give time and opportunity for the perpetration of the burglary, suggested by the perusal of Mr Bagshawe's letter—induced Mr Bristowe to accompany him to Bristol, was soon afterwards transported for another offence.



THE TWINS.

THE records of police courts afford but imperfect evidence of the business really effected by the officers attached to them. The machinery of English criminal law is, in practice, so subservient to the caprice of individual prosecutors, that instances are constantly occurring in which flagrant violations of natural justice are, from various motives, corrupt and otherwise, withdrawn not only from the cognisance of judicial authority, but from the reprobation of public opinion. Compromises are usually effected between the apprehension of the inculpated parties and the public examination before a magistrate. The object of prosecution has been perhaps obtained by the preliminary step of arrest, or a criminal understanding has been arrived at in the interval; and it is then found utterly hopeless to proceed, however manifest may have appeared the guilt of the prisoner. If you adopt the expedient of compelling the attendance of the prosecutor, it is, in nine cases out of ten, mere time and trouble thrown away. The utter forgetfulness of memory, the loose recollection of facts so vividly remembered but a few hours before, the deli-

cately scrupulous hesitation to depose confidently to the clearest verities, evinced by the reluctant prosecutor, render a conviction almost impossible; so that—except in cases of flagrant and startling crimes, which are of course earnestly prosecuted by the crown lawyers—offences against ‘our sovereign lady the Queen, her crown, and dignity,’ as criminal indictments run, if no aggrieved subject voluntarily appears to challenge justice in behalf of his liege lady, remain unchastised, and not unfrequently unexposed. From several examples of this prevalent abuse which have come within my own knowledge, I select the following instance, merely changing the names of the parties.

My services, the superintendent late one afternoon informed me, were required in a perplexed and entangled affair, which would probably occupy me for some time, as orders had been given to investigate the matter thoroughly. ‘There,’ he added, ‘is a Mr Repton, a highly respectable country solicitor’s card. He is from Lancashire, and is staying at Webb’s Hotel, Piccadilly. You are to see him at once. He will put you in possession of all the facts—surmises rather, I should say, for the facts, to my apprehension, are scant enough—connected with the case, and you will then use all possible diligence to ascertain first if the alleged crime has been really committed, and if so, of course to bring the criminal or criminals to justice.’

I found Mr Repton, a stout, bald-headed, gentlemanly person, apparently about sixty years of age, just in the act of going out. ‘I have a pressing engagement for this evening, Mr Waters,’ said he, after glancing at the introductory note I had brought, ‘and cannot possibly go into the business with the attention and minuteness it requires till the morning. But I’ll tell you what: one of the parties concerned, and the one, too, with whom you will have especially to deal, is, I know, to be at Covent Garden Theatre

this evening. It is of course necessary that you should be thoroughly acquainted with his person; and if you will go with me in the cab that is waiting outside, I will step with you into the theatre, and point him out.' I assented; and on entering Covent Garden pit, Mr Repton, who kept behind me, to avoid observation, directed my attention to a group of persons occupying the front seats of the third box in the lower tier from the stage, on the right-hand side of the house. They were—a gentleman of about thirty years of age; his wife, a very elegant person, a year or two younger; and three children, the eldest of whom, a boy, could not have been more than six or seven years old. This done, Mr Repton left the theatre, and about two hours afterwards I did the same.

The next morning I breakfasted with the Lancashire solicitor by appointment. As soon as breakfast was concluded, business was at once entered upon.

'You closely observed Sir Charles Malvern yesterday evening, I presume?' said Mr Repton.

'I paid great attention to the gentleman you pointed out to me,' I answered, 'if he be Sir Charles Malvern.'

'He is, or at least—— But of that presently. First let me inform you that Malvern, a few months ago, was a beggared gamester, or nearly so, to speak with precision. He is now in good bodily health, has a charming wife, and a family to whom he is much attached, an unencumbered estate of about twelve thousand a year, and has not gambled since he came into possession of the property. This premised, is there, think you, anything remarkable in Sir Charles's demeanour?'

'Singularity so. My impression was, that he was labouring under a terrible depression of spirits, caused, I imagined, by pecuniary difficulties. His manner was restless, abstracted. He paid no attention whatever to anything

going on on the stage, except when his wife or one of the children especially challenged his attention; and then, a brief answer returned, he relapsed into the same restless unobservance as before. He is very nervous too. The box door was suddenly opened once or twice, and I noticed his sudden start each time.'

'You have exactly described him. Well, that perturbed, unquiet feverishness of manner has constantly distinguished him since his accession to the Redwood estates, and only since then. It strengthens me and one or two others in possibly an unfounded suspicion, which—— But I had better, if I wish to render myself intelligible, relate matters in due sequence.

'Sir Thomas Redwood, whose property in Lancashire is chiefly in the neighbourhood of Liverpool, met his death, as did his only son Mr Archibald Redwood, about six months ago, in a very sudden and shocking manner. They were out trying a splendid mare for the first time in harness, which Sir Thomas had lately purchased at a very high price. Two grooms on horseback were in attendance, to render assistance if required, for the animal was a very powerful, high-spirited one. All went very well till they arrived in front of Mr Meredith's place, Oak Villa. This gentleman has a passion for firing off a number of brass cannon on the anniversary of such events as he deems worthy of the honour. This happened, unfortunately, to be one of Mr Meredith's gunpowder days; and as Sir Thomas and his son were passing, a stream of light flashed directly in the eyes of the mare, followed by the roar of artillery, at no more than about ten paces off. The terrified animal became instantly unmanageable, got the bit between her teeth, and darted off at the wildest speed. The road is a curved and rugged one; and after tearing along for about half a mile, the off-wheel of the gig came, at an abrupt turn, full against

a milestone. The tremendous shock hurled the two unfortunate gentlemen upon the road with frightful violence, tore the vehicle almost completely asunder, and so injured the mare that she died the next day. The alarmed grooms, who had not only been unable to render assistance, but even to keep up with the terrified mare, found Mr Archibald Redwood quite dead. The spine had been broken close to the nape of the neck: his head, in fact, was doubled up, so to speak, under the body. Sir Thomas still breathed, and was conveyed to Redwood manor-house. Surgical assistance was promptly obtained; but the internal injuries were so great, that the excellent old gentleman expired in a few hours after he had reached his home. I was hastily sent for; and when I arrived, Sir Thomas was still fully conscious. He imparted to me matters of great moment, to which he requested I would direct, after his decease, my best care and attention. His son, I was aware, had but just returned from a tour on the continent, where he had been absent for nearly a twelvemonth; but I was not aware, neither was his father till the day before his death, that Mr Archibald Redwood had not only secretly espoused a Miss Ashton—of a reduced family, but belonging to our best gentry—but had returned home, not solely for the purpose of soliciting Sir Thomas's forgiveness of his unauthorised espousals, but that the probable heir of Redwood might be born within the walls of the ancient manor-house. After the first burst of passion and surprise, Sir Thomas, one of the best-hearted men in the universe, cordially forgave his son's disobedience—partly, and quite rightly, imputing it to his own foolish urgency in pressing a union with one of the Lacy family, with which the baronet was very intimate, and whose estate adjoined his.

‘Well, this lady, now a widow, had been left by her husband at Chester, whilst he came on to seek an explana-

tion with his father. Mr Archibald Redwood was to have set out the next morning in one of Sir Thomas's carriages to bring home his wife ; and the baronet, with his dying breath, bade me assure her of his entire forgiveness, and his earnest hope and trust that through her offspring the race of the Redwoods might be continued in a direct line. The family estates, I should tell you, being strictly entailed on heirs-male, devolved, if no son of Mr Archibald Redwood should bar his claim, upon Charles Malvern, the son of a cousin of the late Sir Thomas Redwood. The baronet had always felt partially towards Malvern, and had assisted him pecuniarily a hundred times. Sir Thomas also directed me to draw as quickly as I could a short will bequeathing Mr Charles Malvern twenty thousand pounds out of the personals. I wrote as expeditiously as I could, but by the time the paper was ready for his signature, Sir Thomas was no longer conscious. I placed the pen in his hand, and I fancied he understood the purpose, for his fingers closed faintly upon it ; but the power to guide was utterly gone, and only a slight scrambling stroke marked the paper as the pen slid across it in the direction of the falling arm.

‘Mr Malvern arrived at the manor-house about an hour after Sir Thomas breathed his last. It was clearly apparent through all his sorrow, partly real, I have no doubt, as well as partly assumed, that joy, the joy of riches, splendour, station was dancing at his heart, and, spite of all his efforts to subdue or conceal it, sparkling in his eye. I briefly, but as gently as I could, acquainted him with the true position of affairs. The revulsion of feeling which ensued entirely unmanned him ; and it was not till an hour afterwards that he recovered his self-possession sufficiently to converse reasonably and coolly upon his position. At last he became apparently reconciled to the sudden overclouding of his imaginatively brilliant prospects, and it was agreed that as

he was a relative of the widow, he should at once set off to break the sad news to her. Well, a few days after his departure, I received a letter from him, stating that Lady Redwood—I don't think, by the way, that, as her husband died before succeeding to the baronetcy, she is entitled to that appellation of honour; we, however, call her so out of courtesy—that Lady Redwood, though prematurely confined in consequence of the intelligence of her husband's untimely death, had given birth to a female child, and that both mother and daughter were as well as could be expected. This, you will agree, seemed perfectly satisfactory?’

‘Entirely so.’

‘So I thought. Mr Malvern was now unquestionably, whether Sir Charles Malvern or not, the proprietor of the Redwood estates, burdened as with a charge, in accordance with the conditions of the entails, of a thousand pounds life annuity to the late Mr Redwood's infant daughter.

‘Sir Charles returned to Redwood manor-house, where his wife and family soon afterwards arrived. Lady Redwood had been joined, I understood, by her mother, Mrs Ashton, and would, when able to undertake the journey, return to her maternal home. It was about two months after Sir Thomas Redwood's death that I determined to pay Lady Redwood a visit, in order to the winding up of the personal estate, which it was desirable to accomplish as speedily as possible; and then a new and terrible light flashed upon me.’

‘What on earth!’ I exclaimed, for the first time breaking silence—‘what could there be to reveal?’

‘Only,’ rejoined Mr Repton, ‘that ill, delirious, as Lady Redwood admitted herself to have been, it was her intimate, unconquerable conviction *that she had given birth to twins!*’

‘And you suspect’——

‘We don't know what to suspect. Should the lady's con-

fidant belief be correct, the missing child might have been a boy. You understand?’

‘I do. But is there any tangible evidence to justify this horrible suspicion?’

‘Yes; the surgeon-apothecary and his wife, a Mr and Mrs Williams, who attended Lady Redwood, have suddenly disappeared from Chester, and from no explainable motive, having left or abandoned a fair business there.’

‘That has certainly an ugly look.’

‘True; and a few days ago I received information that Williams has been seen in Birmingham. He was well dressed, and not apparently in any business.’

‘There certainly appears some ground for suspicion. What plan of operations do you propose?’

‘That,’ replied Mr Repton, ‘I must leave to your more practised sagacity. I can only undertake that no means shall be lacking that may be required.’

‘It will be better, perhaps,’ I suggested, after an interval of reflection; ‘that I should proceed to Birmingham at once. You have of course an accurate description of the persons of Williams and his wife ready?’

‘I have; and very accurate pen-and-ink sketches I am told they are. Besides these, I have also here,’ continued Mr Repton, taking from his pocket-book a sheet of carefully folded satin paper, ‘a full description of the female baby, drawn up by its mother, under the impression that twins always—I believe they generally do—closely resemble each other. “Light hair, blue eyes, dimpled chin”—and so on. The lady—a very charming person, I assure you, and meek and gentle as a fawn—is chiefly anxious to recover her child. You and I, should our suspicions be confirmed, have other duties to perform.’

This was pretty nearly all that passed, and the next day I was in Birmingham.

The search, as I was compelled to be very cautious in my inquiries, was tedious, but finally successful. Mr and Mrs Williams I discovered living in a pretty house, with neat grounds attached, about two miles out of Birmingham, on the coach road to Wolverhampton. Their assumed name was Burrige, and I ascertained from the servant-girl, who fetched their dinner and supper beer, and occasionally wine and spirits, from a neighbouring tavern, that they had one child, a boy, a few months old, of whom neither father nor mother seemed very fond. By dint of much perseverance, I at length got upon pretty familiar terms with Mr Burrige, *alias* Williams. He spent his evenings regularly in a tavern; but with all the painstaking, indefatigable ingenuity I employed, the chief knowledge I acquired, during three weeks of assiduous endeavour, was, that my friend Burrige intended, immediately after a visit which he expected shortly to receive from a rich and influential relative in London, to emigrate to America, at all events to go abroad. This was, however, very significant and precious information; and very rarely, indeed, was he, after I had obtained it, out of my sight or observation. At length perseverance obtained its reward. One morning I discerned my friend, much more sprucely attired than ordinarily, make his way to the railway station, and there question with eager looks every passenger that alighted from the first-class carriages. At last a gentleman, whom I instantly recognised, spite of his shawl and other wrappings, arrived by the express train from London. Williams instantly accosted him, a cab was called, and away they drove. I followed in another, and saw them both alight at a hotel in New Street. I also alighted, and was mentally debating how to proceed, when Williams came out of the tavern, and proceeded in the direction of his home. I followed, overtook him, and soon contrived to ascertain that he and his wife had important

business to transact in Birmingham the next morning, which would render it impossible he should meet me, as I proposed, till two or three o'clock in the afternoon at the earliest; and the next morning, my esteemed friend informed me, he would leave the place, probably for ever. An hour after this interesting conversation, I, accompanied by the chief of the Birmingham police, was closeted with the landlord of the hotel in New Street, a highly respectable person, who promised us every assistance in his power. Sir Charles Malvern had, we found, engaged a private room for the transaction of important business with some persons he expected in the morning, and our plans were soon fully matured and agreed upon.

I slept little that night, and immediately after breakfast hastened with my Birmingham colleague to the hotel. The apartment assigned for Sir Charles Malvern's use had been a bedroom, and a large wardrobe, with a high wing at each end, still remained in it. We tried if it would hold us, and with very little stooping and squeezing found it would do very well. The landlord soon gave us the signal to be on the alert, and in we jammed ourselves, locking the wing-doors on the inside. A minute or two afterwards Sir Charles and Mr and Mrs Williams entered, and paper, pens, and ink having been brought, business commenced in right earnest. Their conversation it is needless to detail. It will suffice to observe that it was manifest Sir Charles, by a heavy bribe, had induced the accoucheur and his wife to conceal the birth of the male child, which, as I suspected, was that which Williams and his spouse were bringing up as their own. I must do the fictitious baronet the justice to say that he had from the first the utmost anxiety that no harm should befall the infant. Mr Malvern's nervous dread lest his confederates should be questioned, had induced their hurried departure from Chester, and it now appeared that

he had become aware of the suspicions entertained by Mr Repton, and could not rest till the Williamses and the child were safe out of the country. It was now insisted by the woman more especially that the agreement for the large annual payment to be made by Sir Charles should be fairly written out and signed in plain 'black and white,' to use Mrs Williams's expression, in order that no future misunderstandings might arise. This Mr Malvern strongly objected to ; but finding the woman would accept of no other terms, he sullenly complied, and at the same time reiterated, that if any harm should befall the boy—to whom he intended, he said, to leave a handsome fortune—he would cease, regardless of consequences to himself, to pay the Williamses a single shilling.

A silence of several minutes followed, broken only by the scratching of the pen on the paper. The time to me seemed an age, squeezed, crooked, stifled as I was in that narrow box, and so I afterwards learned it did to my fellow-sufferer. At length Mr Malvern said, in the same cautious whisper in which they had all hitherto spoken: 'This will do, I think ;' and read what he had written. Mr and Mrs Williams signified their approval ; and as matters were now fully ripe, I gently turned the key, and very softly pushed open the door. The backs of the amiable trio were towards me, and as my boots were off, and the apartment was thickly carpeted, I approached unperceived, and to the inexpressible horror and astonishment of the parties concerned, whose heads were bent eagerly over the important document, a hand, which belonged to none of them, was thrust silently but swiftly forward, and grasped the precious instrument. A fierce exclamation from Mr Malvern as he started from his seat, and a convulsive scream from Mrs Williams as she fell back in hers, followed ; and to add to the animation of the tableau, my friend in the opposite wing emerged at the same moment

from his hiding-place. Mr Malvern comprehended at a glance the situation of affairs, and made a furious dash at the paper. I was quicker as well as stronger than he, and he failed in his object. Resistance was of course out of the question ; and in less than two hours we were speeding on the rail towards London, accompanied by the child, whom we intrusted to Williams's servant-maid.

Mr Repton was still in town, and Mrs Ashton, Lady Redwood, and her unmarried sister, in their impatience of intelligence, had arrived several days before. I had the pleasure of accompanying Mr Repton with the child and his temporary nurse to Osborne's Hotel in the Adelphi ; and I really at first feared for the excited mother's reason, or that she would do the infant a mischief, so tumultuous, so frenzied was her rapturous joy at the recovery of her lost treasure. When placed in the cot beside the female infant, the resemblance of the one to the other was certainly almost perfect. I never saw before nor since so complete a likeness. This was enough for the mother ; but, fortunately, we had much more satisfactory evidence, legally viewed, to establish the identity of the child in a court of law, should the necessity arise for doing so.

Here, as far as I am concerned, all positive knowledge of this curious piece of family history ends. Of subsequent transactions between the parties I had no personal cognisance. I only know there was a failure of justice, and I can pretty well guess from what motives. The parties I arrested in Birmingham were kept in strict custody for several days ; but no entreaty, no threats, could induce the institutors of the inquiry to appear against the detected criminals.

Mrs and Miss Ashton, Lady Redwood and her children, left town the next day but one for Redwood Manor ; and Mr Repton coolly told the angry superintendent that 'he

had no instructions to prosecute.' He, too, was speedily off, and the prisoners were necessarily discharged out of custody.

I saw about three weeks afterwards in a morning paper that Mr Malvern, 'whom the birth of a posthumous heir in a direct line had necessarily deprived of all chance of succession to the Redwood estates and the baronetcy, which the newspapers had so absurdly conferred on him, was, with his amiable lady and family, about to leave England for Italy, where they intended to remain some time.' The expressed but uncompleted will of the deceased baronet, Sir Thomas Redwood, had been, it was further stated, carried into effect, and the legacy intended for Mr Malvern paid over to him. The Williamses never, to my knowledge, attained to the dignity of a notice in the newspapers; but I believe they pursued their original intention of passing over to America.

Thus not only 'Offence's gilded hand,' but some of the best feelings of our nature, not unfrequently 'shove by Justice,' and place a concealing gloss over deeds which, in other circumstances, would have infallibly consigned the perpetrators to a prison or perhaps the hulks. Whether, however, any enactment could effectually grapple with an abuse which springs from motives so natural and amiable, is a question which I must leave to wiser heads than mine to discuss and determine.



MARY KINGSFORD.



TOWARDS the close of the year 1836, I was hurriedly despatched to Liverpool for the purpose of securing the person of one Charles James Marshall, a collecting clerk, who, it was suddenly discovered, had absconded with a considerable sum of money belonging to his employers.

I was too late—Charles James Marshall having sailed in one of the American liners the day before my arrival in the northern commercial capital. This fact well ascertained, I immediately set out on my return to London. Winter had come upon us unusually early; the weather was bitterly cold; and a piercing wind caused the snow, which had been falling heavily for several hours, to gyrate in fierce blinding eddies, and heaped it up here and there into large and dangerous drifts. The obstruction offered by the rapidly congealing snow greatly delayed our progress between Liverpool and Birmingham; and at a few miles only distant from the latter city, the leading engine ran off the line. Fortunately the rate at which we were travelling was a very slow one, and no accident of moment occurred. Having no luggage to care for, I walked on to Birmingham,

where I found the parliamentary train just on the point of starting, and with some hesitation, on account of the severity of the weather, I took my seat in one of the then very much exposed and uncomfortable carriages. We travelled steadily and safely though slowly along, and in the afternoon reached Rugby Station, where we were to remain, the guard told us, till a fast down-train had passed. All of us hurried as quickly as we could to the large room at this station, where blazing fires and other appliances soon thawed the half-frozen bodies and loosened the tongues of the numerous and motley passengers. After recovering the use of my benumbed limbs and faculties, I had leisure to look around and survey the miscellaneous assemblage about me.

Two persons had travelled in the same compartment with me from Birmingham, whose exterior, as disclosed by the dim light of the railway carriage, created some surprise that such finely attired fashionable gentlemen should stoop to journey by the plebeian penny-a-mile train. I could now observe them in a clearer light, and surprise at their apparent condescension vanished at once. To an eye less experienced than mine in the artifices and expedients familiar to a certain class of 'swells,' they might perhaps have passed muster for what they assumed to be, especially amidst the varied crowd of a 'parliamentary;' but their copper finery could not for a moment impose upon me. The watch-chains were, I saw, mosaic; the watches, so frequently displayed, gilt; eye-glasses the same; the coats, fur-collared and cuffed, were ill-fitting and second-hand; ditto of the varnished boots and renovated velvet waistcoats; while the luxuriant moustaches and whiskers and flowing wigs were unmistakably mere *pièces d'occasion*—assumed and diversified at pleasure. They were both apparently about fifty years of age; one of them perhaps one or two years less than that. I watched them narrowly, the more

so from their making themselves ostentatiously attentive to a young woman—girl rather she seemed—of a remarkably graceful figure, but whose face I had not yet obtained a glimpse of. They made boisterous way for her to the fire, and were profuse and noisy in their offers of refreshment—all of which, I observed, were peremptorily declined. She was dressed in deep unexpensive mourning; and from her timid gestures and averted head, whenever either of the fellows addressed her, was, it was evident, terrified as well as annoyed by their rude and insolent notice. I quietly drew near to the side of the fire-place at which she stood, and with some difficulty obtained a sight of her features. I was struck with extreme surprise, not so much at her singular beauty, as from an instantaneous conviction that she was known to me, or at least that I had seen her frequently before, but where or when I could not at all call to mind. Again I looked, and my first impression was confirmed. At this moment the elder of the two men I have partially described placed his hand, with a rude familiarity, upon the girl's shoulder, proffering at the same time a glass of hot brandy-and-water for her acceptance. She turned sharply and indignantly away from the fellow; and looking round as if for protection, caught my eagerly fixed gaze.

'Mr Waters!' she impulsively ejaculated. 'Oh, I am so glad!'

'Yes,' I answered, 'that is certainly my name; but I scarcely remember—— Stand back, fellow!' I angrily continued, as her tormentor, emboldened by the spirits he had drunk, pressed with a jeering grin upon his face towards her, still tendering the brandy-and-water. 'Stand back!' He replied by a curse and a threat. The next moment his flowing wig was whirling across the room, and he standing with his bullet-head bare but for a few locks of iron-gray, in an attitude of speechless rage and confusion,

increased by the peals of laughter which greeted his ludicrous unwigged aspect. He quickly put himself in a fighting attitude, and, backed by his companion, challenged me to battle. This was quite out of the question; and I was somewhat at a loss how to proceed, when the bell announcing the instant departure of the train rang out, my furious antagonist gathered up and adjusted his wig, and we all sallied forth to take our places—the young woman holding fast by my arm, and in a low nervous voice begging me not to leave her. I watched the two fellows take their seats, and then led her to the hindmost carriage, which we had to ourselves as far as the next station.

‘Are Mrs Waters and Emily quite well?’ said the young woman colouring, and lowering her eyes beneath my earnest gaze, which she seemed for a moment to misinterpret.

‘Quite—entirely so,’ I almost stammered. ‘You know us then?’

‘Surely I do,’ she replied, reassured by my manner. ‘But you, it seems,’ she presently added with a winning smile, ‘have quite forgotten little Mary Kingsford.’

‘Mary Kingsford!’ I exclaimed almost with a shout. ‘Why, so it is! But what a transformation a few years have effected!’

‘Do you think so? Not *pretty* Mary Kingsford now then, I suppose?’ she added with a light, pleasant laugh.

‘You know what I mean, you vain puss you!’ I rejoined quite gleefully; for I was overjoyed at meeting with the gentle, well-remembered playmate of my own eldest girl. We were old familiar friends—almost father and daughter—in an instant.

Little Mary Kingsford, I should state, was, when I left Yorkshire, one of the prettiest, most engaging children I had ever seen; and a petted favourite not only with us, but of every other family in the neighbourhood. She was the

only child of Philip and Mary Kingsford—a humble, worthy, and much-respected couple. The father was gardener to Sir Pyott Dalzell, and her mother eked out his wages to a respectable maintenance by keeping a cheap children's school. The change which a few years had wrought in the beautiful child was quite sufficient to account for my imperfect recognition of her; but the instant her name was mentioned, I at once recognised the rare comeliness which had charmed us all in her childhood. The soft brown eyes were the same, though now revealing profounder depths, and emitting a more pensive expression; the hair, though deepened in colour, was still golden; her complexion, lit up as it now was by a sweet blush, was brilliant as ever; whilst her child-person had become matured and developed into womanly symmetry and grace. The brilliancy of colour vanished from her cheek as I glanced meaningly at her mourning dress.

'Yes,' she murmured in a sad quivering voice—'yes, father is gone! It will be six months come next Thursday that he died! Mother is well,' she continued more cheerfully after a pause, 'in health, but poorly off; and I—and I,' she added with a faint effort at a smile, 'am going to London to seek my fortune!'

'To seek your fortune!'

'Yes; you know my cousin, Sophy Clarke? In one of her letters she said she often saw you.'

I nodded without speaking. I knew little of Sophia Clarke, except that she was the somewhat gay, coquettish shopwoman of a highly respectable confectioner in the Strand, whom I shall call by the name of Morris.

'I am to be Sophy's fellow shop-assistant,' continued Mary Kingsford; 'not of course at first at such good wages as she gets. So lucky for me, is it not, since I must go to service? And so kind, too, of Sophy to interest herself for me!'

‘Well, it may be so. But surely I have heard—my wife at least has—that you and Richard Westlake were engaged?—Excuse me, Mary; I was not aware the subject was a painful or unpleasant one.’

‘Richard’s father,’ she replied with some spirit, ‘has higher views for his son. It is all off between us now,’ she added; ‘and perhaps it is for the best that it should be so.’

I could have rightly interpreted these words without the aid of the partially expressed sigh which followed them. The perilous position of so attractive, so inexperienced, so guileless a young creature, amidst the temptations and vanities of London, so painfully impressed and preoccupied me, that I scarcely uttered another word till the rapidly diminishing rate of the train announced that we neared a station, after which it was probable we should have no further opportunity for private converse.

‘Those men—those fellows at Rugby—where did you meet with them?’ I inquired.

‘About thirty or forty miles below Birmingham, where they entered the carriage in which I was seated. At Birmingham I managed to avoid them.’

Little more passed between us till we reached London. Sophia Clarke received her cousin at the Euston Station, and was profuse of felicitations and compliments upon her arrival and personal appearance. After receiving a promise from Mary Kingsford to call and take tea with my wife and her old playmate on the following Sunday, I handed the two young women into a cab in waiting, and they drove off. I had not moved away from the spot when a voice a few paces behind me, which I thought I recognised, called out: ‘Quick, coachee, or you’ll lose sight of them!’ As I turned quickly round another cab drove smartly off, which I followed at a run. I found, on reaching Lower Seymour Street, that I was not mistaken as to the owner of the voice,

nor of his purpose. The fellow I had unrigged at Rugby thrust his body half out of the cab window, and pointing to the vehicle which contained the two girls, called out to the driver 'to mind and make no mistake.' The man nodded intelligence, and lashed his horse into a faster pace. Nothing that I might do could prevent the fellows from ascertaining Mary Kingsford's place of abode; and as that was all that, for the present at least, need be apprehended, I desisted from pursuit, and bent my steps homewards.

Mary Kingsford kept her appointment on the Sunday, and in reply to our questioning, said she liked her situation very well. Mr and Mrs Morris were exceedingly kind to her; so was Sophia. 'Her cousin,' she added in reply to a look which I could not repress, 'was perhaps a little gay and free of manner, but the best-hearted creature in the world.' The two fellows who had followed them had, I found, already twice visited the shop; but their attentions appeared now to be exclusively directed towards Sophia Clarke, whose vanity they not a little gratified. The names they gave were Hartley and Simpson. So entirely guileless and unsophisticated was the gentle country maiden, that I saw she scarcely comprehended the hints and warnings which I threw out. At parting, however, she made me a serious promise that she would instantly apply to me should any difficulty or perplexity overtake her.

I often called in at the confectioner's, and was gratified to find that Mary's modest propriety of behaviour, in a somewhat difficult position, had gained her the good-will of her employers, who invariably spoke of her with kindness and respect. Nevertheless, the cark and care of a London life, with its incessant employment and late hours, soon, I perceived, began to tell upon her health and spirits; and it was consequently with a strong emotion of pleasure I heard from my wife that she had seen a passage in a letter from

Mary's mother to the effect that the elder Westlake was betraying symptoms of yielding to the angry and passionate expostulations of his only son, relative to the enforced breaking off of his engagement with Mary Kingsford. The blush with which she presented the letter was, I was told, very eloquent.

One evening, on passing Morris's shop, I observed Hartley and Simpson there. They were swallowing custards and other confectionery with much gusto ; and, from their new and costly habiliments seemed to be in surprisingly good case. They were smirking and smiling at the cousins with rude confidence ; and Sophia Clarke, I was grieved to see, repaid their insulting impertinence by her most elaborate smiles and graces. I passed on ; and presently meeting with a brother-detective, who, it struck me, might know something of the two gentlemen, I turned back with him and pointed them out. A glance sufficed him.

'Hartley and Simpson you say ?' he remarked after we had walked away to some distance : 'those are only two of their numerous *aliases*. I cannot, however, say that I am as yet on very familiar terms with them ; but as I am specially directed to cultivate their acquaintance, there is no doubt we shall be more intimate with each other before long. Gamblers, blacklegs, swindlers, I already know them to be ; and I would take odds they are not unfrequently something more, especially when fortune and the bones run cross with them.'

'They appear to be in high feather just now,' I remarked.

'Yes : they are connected, I suspect, with the gang who cleaned out young Garslade last week in Jermyn Street. I'd lay a trifle,' added my friend, as I turned to leave him, 'that one or both of them will wear the Queen's livery, gray turned up with yellow, before many weeks are past. Good-bya.'

About a fortnight after this conversation, my wife and I paid a visit to Astley's, for the gratification of our youngsters, who had long been promised a sight of the equestrian marvels exhibited at that celebrated amphitheatre. It was the latter end of February; and when we came out of the theatre, we found the weather had changed to dark and sleety, with a sharp, nipping wind. I had to call at Scotland-Yard; my wife and children consequently proceeded home in a cab without me, and after assisting to quell a slight disturbance originating in a gin-palace close by, I went on my way over Westminster Bridge. The inclement weather had cleared the streets and thoroughfares in a surprisingly short time; so that, excepting myself, no foot-passenger was visible on the bridge till I had about half-crossed it, when a female figure, closely muffled up about the head and sobbing bitterly, passed rapidly by on the opposite side. I turned and gazed after the retreating figure: it was a youthful, symmetrical one; and after a few moments' hesitation, I determined to follow at a distance, and as unobservedly as I could. On the woman sped, without pause or hesitation, till she reached Astley's, where I observed her stop suddenly, and toss her arms in the air with a gesture of desperation. I quickened my steps, which she observing, uttered a slight scream, and darted swiftly off again, moaning and sobbing as she ran. The slight momentary glimpse I had obtained of her features beneath the gas-lamp opposite Astley's, suggested a frightful apprehension, and I followed at my utmost speed. She turned at the first cross-street, and I should soon have overtaken her, but that in darting round the corner where she disappeared, I ran full butt against a stout, elderly gentleman, who was hurrying smartly along out of the weather. What with the suddenness of the shock and the slipperiness of the pavement, down we both reeled; and by the time we

had regained our feet and growled savagely at each other, the young woman, whoever she was, had disappeared, and more than half an hour's eager search after her proved fruitless. At last I bethought me of hiding at one corner of Westminster Bridge. I had watched impatiently for about twenty minutes, when I observed the object of my pursuit stealing timidly and furtively towards the bridge on the opposite side of the way. As she came nearly abreast of where I stood, I darted forward ; she saw, without recognising me, and uttering an exclamation of terror, flew down towards the river, where a number of pieces of balk and other timber were fastened together, forming a kind of loose raft. I followed with desperate haste, for I saw that it was indeed Mary Kingsford, and loudly calling to her by name to stop. She did not appear to hear me, and in a few moments the unhappy girl had gained the end of the timber-raft. One instant she paused with clasped hands upon the brink, and in another had thrown herself into the dark and moaning river. On reaching the spot where she had disappeared, I could not at first see her in consequence of the dark mourning dress she had on. Presently I caught sight of her, still upborne by her spread clothes, but already carried by the swift current beyond my reach. The only chance was to crawl along a piece of round timber which projected farther into the river, and by the end of which she must pass. This I effected with some difficulty ; and laying myself out at full length, vainly endeavoured, with outstretched straining arms, to grasp her dress. There was nothing left for it but to plunge in after her. I will confess that I hesitated to do so. I was encumbered with a heavy dress, which there was no time to put off ; and moreover, like most inland men, I was but an indifferent swimmer. My indecision quickly vanished. The wretched girl, though gradually sinking, had not yet uttered a cry or appeared to

struggle ; but when the chilling waters reached her lips, she seemed to suddenly revive to a consciousness of the horror of her fate ; she fought wildly with the ingulfing tide, and shrieked piteously for help. Before one could count ten I had grasped her by the arm and lifted her head above the surface of the river. As I did so I felt as if suddenly incased and weighed down by leaden garments, so quickly had my thick clothing and high boots sucked in the water. Vainly, thus burdened and impeded, did I endeavour to regain the raft ; the strong tide bore us outwards, and I glared round, in inexpressible dismay, for some means of extrication from the frightful peril in which I found myself involved. Happily, right in the direction the tide was drifting us, a large barge lay moored by a chain-cable. Eagerly I seized and twined one arm firmly round it, and thus partially secure, hallooed with renewed power for assistance. It soon came : a passer-by had witnessed the flight of the girl and my pursuit, and was already hastening with others to our assistance. A wherry was unmoored : guided by my voice, they soon reached us ; and but a brief interval elapsed before we were safely housed in an adjoining tavern.

A change of dress, with which the landlord kindly supplied me, a blazing fire, and a couple of glasses of hot brandy-and-water, soon restored warmth and vigour to my chilled and partially benumbed limbs ; but more than two hours elapsed before Mary, who had swallowed a good deal of water, was in a condition to be removed. I had just sent for a cab, when two police-officers, well known to me, entered the room with official briskness. Mary screamed, staggered towards me, and clinging to my arm, besought me with frantic earnestness to save her.

‘What *is* the meaning of this ?’ I exclaimed, addressing one of the police-officers.

‘Merely,’ said he, ‘that the young woman that’s clinging so tight to you has been committing an audacious robbery’——

‘No—no—no!’ broke in the terrified girl.

‘Oh! of course you’ll say so,’ continued the officer. ‘All I know is, that the diamond brooch was found snugly hid away in her own box. But come; we have been after you for the last three hours; so you had better come along at once.’

‘Save me!—save me!’ sobbed poor Mary, as she tightened her grasp upon my arm and looked with beseeching agony in my face.

‘Be comforted,’ I whispered; ‘you shall go home with me. Calm yourself, Miss Kingsford,’ I added in a louder tone: ‘I no more believe you have stolen a diamond brooch than that I have.’

‘Bless you!—bless you!’ she gasped in the intervals of her convulsive sobs.

‘There is some wretched misapprehension in this business, I am quite sure,’ I continued; ‘but at all events I shall bail her—for this night at least.’

‘Bail her! That is hardly regular.’

‘No; but you will tell the superintendent that Mary Kingsford is in my custody, and that I answer for her appearance to-morrow.’

The men hesitated, but I stood too well at headquarters for them to do more than hesitate; and the cab I had ordered being just then announced, I passed with Mary out of the room as quickly as I could, for I feared her senses were again leaving her. The air revived her somewhat, and I lifted her into the cab, placing myself beside her. She appeared to listen in fearful doubt whether I should be allowed to take her with me; and it was not till the wheels had made a score of revolutions that her fears vanished;

then throwing herself upon my neck in an ecstasy of gratitude, she burst into a flood of tears, and continued till we reached home sobbing on my bosom like a broken-hearted child. She had, I found, been there about ten o'clock to seek me, and being told that I was gone to 'Astley's, had started off to find me there.

Mary still slept, or at least she had not risen, when I left home the following morning to endeavour to get at the bottom of the strange accusation preferred against her. I first saw the superintendent, who, after hearing what I had to say, quite approved of all that I had done, and intrusted the case entirely to my care. I next saw Mr and Mrs Morris and Sophia Clarke, and then waited upon the prosecutor, a youngish gentleman of the name of Saville, lodging in Essex Street, Strand. One or two things I heard necessitated a visit to other officers of police, incidentally, as I found, mixed up with the affair. By the time all this was done, and an effectual watch had been placed upon Mr Augustus Saville's movements, evening had fallen, and I wended my way homewards, both to obtain a little rest and hear Mary Kingsford's version of the strange story.

The result of my inquiries may be thus briefly summed up. Ten days before, Sophia Clarke told her cousin that she had orders for Covent-Garden Theatre; and as it was not one of their busy nights, she thought they might obtain leave to go. Mary expressed her doubt of this, as both Mr and Mrs Morris, who were strict and somewhat fanatical Dissenters, disapproved of playgoing, especially for young women. Nevertheless Sophia asked; informed Mary that the required permission had been readily accorded, and off they went in high spirits; Mary especially, who had never been to a theatre in her life before. When there they were joined by Hartley and Simpson, much to Mary's annoyance

and vexation, especially as she saw that her cousin expected them. She had, in fact, accepted the orders from them. At the conclusion of the entertainments, they all four came out together, when suddenly there arose a hustling and confusion, accompanied with loud outcries and a violent swaying to and fro of the crowd. The disturbance was, however, soon quelled; and Mary and her cousin had reached the outer door, when two police-officers seized Hartley and his friend, and insisted upon their going with them. A scuffle ensued; but other officers being at hand, the two men were secured and carried off. The cousins, terribly frightened, called a coach, and were very glad to find themselves safe at home again. And now it came out that Mr and Mrs Morris had been told that they were going to spend the evening at *my* house, and had no idea they were going to the play! Vexed as Mary was at the deception, she was too kindly tempered to refuse to keep her cousin's secret, especially knowing as she did that the discovery of the deceit Sophia had practised would in all probability be followed by her immediate discharge. Hartley and his friend swaggered on the following afternoon into the shop, and whispered Sophia that their arrest by the police had arisen from a strange mistake, for which the most ample apologies had been offered and accepted. After this matters went on as usual, except that Mary perceived a growing insolence and familiarity in Hartley's manner towards her. His language was frequently quite unintelligible, and once he asked her plainly if she did not mean that he should go *shares* in the prize she had lately found. Upon Mary replying that she did not comprehend him, his look became absolutely ferocious, and he exclaimed: 'Oh, that's your game, is it? But don't try it on with me, my good girl, I advise you.' So violent did he become, that Mr Morris was attracted by the noise, and ultimately bundled him, neck

and heels, out of the shop. She had not seen either him or his companion since.

On the evening of the previous day, a gentleman whom she did not remember to have seen before, entered the shop, took a seat, and helped himself to a tart. She observed that after a while he looked at her very earnestly, and at length approaching quite close, said : 'You were at Covent-Garden Theatre last Tuesday evening week ?' Mary was struck, as she said, all of a heap, for both Mr and Mrs Morris were in the shop and heard the question.

'O no, no ! you mistake,' she said hurriedly, and feeling at the same time her cheeks kindle into flame.

'Nay, but you were though,' rejoined the gentleman. And then lowering his voice to a whisper, he said : 'And let me advise you, if you would avoid exposure and condign punishment, to restore me the diamond brooch you robbed me of on that evening.'

Mary screamed with terror, and a regular scene ensued. She was obliged to confess she had told a falsehood in denying she was at the theatre on the night in question, and Mr Morris after that seemed inclined to believe anything of her. The gentleman persisted in his charge ; but at the same time vehemently iterating his assurance that all he wanted was his property ; and it was ultimately decided that Mary's boxes as well as her person should be searched. This was done ; and to her utter consternation the brooch was found concealed, they said, in a black-silk reticule. Denials, asseverations, were vain. Mr Saville identified the brooch, but once more offered to be content with its restoration. This Mr Morris, a just, stern man, would not consent to, and he went out to summon a police-officer. Before he returned, Mary, by the advice of both her cousin and Mrs Morris, had fled the house, and hurried in a state of distraction to find me, with what result the reader already knows.

'It is a wretched business,' I observed to my wife, as soon as Mary Kingsford had retired to rest, at about nine o'clock in the evening. 'Like you, I have no doubt of the poor girl's perfect innocence; but how to establish it by satisfactory evidence is another matter. I must take her to Bow Street the day after to-morrow.'

'How dreadful! Can nothing be done? What does the prosecutor say the brooch is worth?'

'His uncle,' he says, 'gave a hundred and twenty guineas for it. But that signifies little; for were its worth only a hundred and twenty farthings, compromise is, you know, out of the question.'

'I did not mean that. Can you shew it me? I am a pretty good judge of the value of jewels.'

'Yes, you can see it.' I took it out of the desk in which I had locked it up, and placed it before her. It was a splendid emerald, encircled by large brilliants.

My wife twisted and turned it about, holding it in all sorts of lights, and at last said: 'I do not believe that either the emerald or the brilliants are real—that the brooch is, in fact, worth twenty shillings intrinsically.'

'Do you say so?' I exclaimed as I jumped up from my chair, for my wife's words gave colour and consistence to a dim and faint suspicion which had crossed my mind. 'Then this Saville is a manifest liar; and perhaps confederate with—— But give me my hat: I will ascertain this point at once.'

I hurried to a jeweller's shop, and found that my wife's opinion was correct: apart from the workmanship, which was very fine, the brooch was valueless. Conjectures, suspicions, hopes, fears, chased each other with bewildering rapidity through my brain; and in order to collect and arrange my thoughts, I stepped out of the whirl of the

streets into Dolly's Chop-house, and decided, over a quiet glass of negus, upon my plan of operations.

The next morning there appeared at the top of the second column of the *Times* an earnest appeal, worded with careful obscurity, so that only the person to whom it was addressed should easily understand it, to the individual who had lost or been robbed of a false stone and brilliants at the theatre, to communicate with a certain person—whose address I gave—without delay, in order to save the reputation, perhaps the life of an innocent person.

I was at the address I had given by nine o'clock. Several hours passed without bringing any one, and I was beginning to despair, when a gentleman of the name of Bagshawe was announced. I fairly leaped for joy, for this was beyond my hopes.

A gentleman presently entered, of about thirty years of age, of a distinguished though somewhat dissipated aspect.

'This brooch is yours?' said I, exhibiting it without delay or preface.

'It is; and I am here to know what your singular advertisement means?'

I briefly explained the situation of affairs.

'The rascals!' he broke in almost before I had finished. 'I will briefly explain it all. A fellow of the name of Hartley, at least that was the name he gave, robbed me, I was pretty sure, of this brooch. I pointed him out to the police; and he was taken into custody; but nothing being found upon him, he was discharged.'

'Not entirely, Mr Bagshawe, on that account. You refused, when arrived at the station-house, to state what you had been robbed of; and you, moreover, said, in presence of the culprit, that you were to embark with your regiment for India the next day. That regiment, I have ascertained, did embark, as you said it would.'

'True; but I had leave of absence, and shall take the overland route. The truth is, that during the walk to the station-house I had leisure to reflect that if I made a formal charge, it would lead to awkward disclosures. This brooch is an imitation of one presented me by a valued relative. Losses at play—since, for this unfortunate young woman's sake, I *must* out with it—obliged me to part with the original; and I wore this, in order to conceal the fact from my relative's knowledge.'

'This, sir,' I replied, 'will prove, with a little management, quite sufficient for all purposes. You have no objection to accompany me to the superintendent?'

'Not in the least.'

About half-past five o'clock on the same evening, the street door was quietly opened by the landlord of the house in which Mr Saville lodged, and I walked into the front room on the first floor, where I found the gentleman I sought languidly reclining on a sofa. 'He gathered himself smartly up at my appearance and looked keenly in my face. He did not appear to like what he read there.

'I did not expect to see you to-day,' he said at last.

'No, perhaps not; but I have news for you. Mr Bagshawe, the owner of the hundred-and-twenty guinea brooch your deceased uncle gave you, did *not* sail for India, and'——

The wretched cur, before I could conclude, was on his knees begging for mercy with disgusting abjectness. I could have spurned the scoundrel where he crawled.

'Come, sir!' I cried, 'let us have no snivelling or humbug: mercy is not in my power, as you ought to know. Strive to deserve it. We want Hartley and Simpson, and cannot find them: you must aid us.'

'O yes; to be sure I will!' eagerly rejoined the rascal.

THE DETECTIVE OFFICER.

'I will go for them at once,' he added with a kind of hesitating assurance.

'Nonsense! Send for them, you mean. Do so, and I will wait their arrival.'

His note was despatched by a sure hand; and meanwhile I arranged the details of the expected meeting. A friend (whom I momentarily expected) and I would ensconce ourselves behind a large screen in the room, whilst Mr Augustus Saville would run playfully over the charming plot with his two friends, so that we might be able to fully appreciate its merits. Mr Saville agreed. I rang the bell, an officer appeared, and we took our posts in readiness. We had scarcely done so, when the street bell rang, and Saville announced the arrival of his confederates. There was a twinkle in the fellow's green eyes which I thought I understood. 'Do not try that on, Mr Augustus Saville,' I quietly remarked: 'we are but two here certainly, but there are half-a-dozen in waiting below.'

No more was said, and in another minute the friends met. It was a boisterously jolly meeting, as far as shaking hands and mutual felicitations on each other's good looks and health went. Saville was, I thought, the most obstreperously gay of all three.

'And yet now I look at you, Saville, closely,' said Hartley, 'you don't look quite the thing. Have you seen a ghost?'

'No; but this cursed brooch affair worries me.'

'Nonsense!—humbug!—it's all right: we are all embarked in the same boat. It's a regular three-handed game. I priggid it; Simmy here whipped it into pretty Mary's reticule, which she, I suppose, never looked into till the row came; and *you* claimed it—a regular merry-go-round, ain't it, eh? Ha, ha, ha!—Ha!'

'Quite so, Mr Hartley,' said I, suddenly facing him, and at the same time stamping on the floor; 'as you say, a

delightful merry-go-round ; and here, you perceive,' I added, as the officers crowded into the room, 'are more gentlemen to join in it.'

I must not stain the paper with the curses, imprecations, blasphemies, which for a brief space resounded through the apartment. The rascals were safely and separately locked up a quarter of an hour afterwards ; and before a month had passed away, all three were transported. It is scarcely necessary to remark that they believed the brooch to be genuine and of great value.

Mary Kingsford did not need to return to her employ. Westlake the elder withdrew his veto upon his son's choice, and the wedding was celebrated in the following May with great rejoicing ; Mary's old playmate officiating as bridemaids, and I as bride's-father. The still young couple have now a rather numerous family, and a home blessed with affection, peace, and competence.



THE WIDOW.



IN the winter of 1833 I was hurriedly and, as I at the time could not help thinking, precipitately despatched to Guernsey, one of the largest of the islands which dot the British Channel, in quest of a gentleman of, till then, high character on the Stock Exchange, who, it was alleged, had absconded with a very large sum of money intrusted to him for investment by a baronet of considerable influence in official quarters. From certain circumstances, it was surmised that Guernsey would be his first hiding-place, and I was obliged to post all the way to Weymouth in order to save the mail-packet, which left that place on the Saturday evening, or night rather, with the Channel Island mails. Mr — had gone, it was conjectured, by way of Southampton. My search, promptly and zealously as I was aided by the Guernsey authorities, proving vain, I determined on going on to Jersey, when a letter arrived by post informing me that the person of whom I was in pursuit had either not intended to defraud his client, or that his heart had failed him at the threshold of crime. A few hours after I had left London he had reappeared, it seems, in his counting-house,

after having a few minutes previously effected the investment of the money in accordance with his client's instructions, and was now, through his attorney, threatening the accuser and all his aiders and abettors with the agreeable processes that in England usually follow sharply at the heels of such rash and hasty proceedings.

My mission over, I proposed to retrace my steps immediately; but unfortunately found myself detained in the island for nearly a week by the hurricane-weather which suddenly set in, rendering it impossible for the mail or other steam-packets to cross the Channel during its continuance. Time limped slowly and heavily away; and frequently, in my impatience to be gone, I walked down to the bleak pier and strained my eyes in the direction in which the steamer from Jersey *should* appear. Almost every time I did so I encountered two persons, who, I could see, were even more impatient to be gone than myself, and probably, I thought, with much more reason. They were a widow lady, not certainly more than thirty years of age, and her son, a fine curly-haired boy, about eight or nine years old, whose natural light-heartedness appeared to be checked, subdued, by the deep grief and sadness which trembled in his mother's fine expressive eyes and shrouded her pale but handsome face. He held her by the hand, often clasping it with both his tiny ones, and looking up to her as she turned despondingly away from the vacant roadstead and raging waters, with a half-frightened half-wondering expression of anxious love, which would frequently cause his mother to bend down, and hurriedly strive to kiss away the sorrowful alarm depicted in the child's face. These two beings strangely interested me; chiefly perhaps because, in my compelled idleness, I had little else except the obstinate and angry weather to engage my attention or occupy my thoughts. There was an unmistakable air of 'better days'

about the widow—a grace of manner which her somewhat faded and unseasonable raiment rendered but the more striking and apparent. Her countenance, one perceived at the first glance, was of remarkable comeliness ; and upon one occasion that I had an opportunity of observing it, I was satisfied that, under happier influences than now appeared to overshadow her, those pale interesting features would light up into beauty as brilliant as it was refined and intellectual.

This introduces another walking mystery which, for want of something better to do, I was conjuring out of my fellow-watchers on the pier. He was a stoutish, strongly-set man of forty years of age, perhaps scarcely so much, showily dressed in new glossy clothes ; French-varnished boots, thin-soled enough, winter as it was, for a drawing-room ; hat of the latest *gent* fashion ; a variegated satin cravat, fastened by two enormous-headed gold pins, connected with a chain ; and a heavy gold chain fastened from his watch waistcoat pocket over his neck. The complexion of his face was a cadaverous white, liberally sprinkled and relieved with gin-and-brandy blossoms ; whilst the coarseness of his not overly-clean hands was with singular taste set off and displayed by some half-dozen glittering rings. I felt a growing conviction, especially on noticing a sudden change in the usual cunning, impudent, leering expression of his eyes, as he caught me looking at him with some earnestness, that I had somewhere had the honour of a previous introduction to him. That he had not been lately at all events used to such resplendent habiliments as he now sported, was abundantly evident from his numerous smirking self-surveys as he strutted jauntily along, and frequent stoppings before shops that, having mirrors in their windows, afforded a more complete view of his charming person. This creature I was convinced was in some way or other con-

nected, or at anyrate acquainted with the young and graceful widow. He was constantly dogging her steps; and I noticed with surprise and some little irritation that his vulgar bow was faintly returned by the lady as they passed each other; and that her recognition of him, slight and distant as it was, was not unfrequently accompanied by a blush, whether arising from a pleasurable emotion or the reverse I could not for some time determine. There is a mystery about blushes, I was and am quite aware, not easily penetrable, more especially about those of widows. I was soon enlightened upon that point. One day, when she happened to be standing alone on the pier—her little boy was gazing through a telescope I had borrowed of the landlord of the hotel where I lodged—he approached, and before she was well aware of his intention, took her hand, uttering at the same time, it seemed, some words of compliment. It was then I observed her features literally flash with a vividness of expression which revealed a beauty I had not before imagined she possessed. The fellow absolutely recoiled before the concentrated scorn which flushed her pale features, and the indignant gesture with which she withdrew her hand from the contamination of his touch. As he turned confusedly and hastily away, his eyes encountered mine, and he muttered some unintelligible sentences, during which the widow and her son left the spot.

‘The lady,’ said I, as soon as she was out of hearing, ‘seems in a cold bitter humour this morning; not unlike the weather.’

‘Yes, Mr Wat—— I beg pardon, Mr What’s-your-name, I would say?’

‘Waters, as I perceive you know quite well. My recollection of you is not so distinct. I have no remembrance of the fashionable clothes and brilliant jewellery, none whatever; but the remarkable countenance I *have* seen.’

'I daresay you have, Waters,' he replied, reassuming his insolent swaggering air. 'I practise at the Old Bailey; and I have several times seen you there, not, as now, in the masquerade of a gentleman, but with a number on your collar.'

I was silly enough to feel annoyed for a moment at the fellow's stupid sarcasm, and turned angrily away.

'There, don't fly into a passion,' continued he with an exulting chuckle. 'I have no wish to be ill friends with so smart a hand as you are. What do you say to a glass or two of wine, if only to keep this confounded wind out of our stomachs? It's cheap enough here.'

I hesitated a few seconds, and then said: 'I have no great objection. But first, whom have I the honour of addressing?'

'Mr Gates. William Gates, *Esquire*, attorney-at-law.'

'Gates! Not the Gates, I hope, in the late Bryant affair?'

'Well—yes. But allow me to say, Waters, that the observations of the judge on that matter, and the consequent proceedings, were quite unjustifiable; and I was strongly advised to petition the House on the subject; but I forbore, perhaps unwisely.'

'From consideration, chiefly, I daresay, for the age and infirmities of his lordship and his numerous family!'

'Come, come,' rejoined Gates with a laugh; 'don't poke fun in that way. The truth is, I get on quite as well without as with the certificate. I transact business now for Mr Everard Preston: you understand?'

'Perfectly. I now remember where I have seen you. But how is it your dress has become so suddenly changed? A few weeks ago, it was nothing like so magnificent?'

'True, my dear boy, true: quite right. I saw you observed that. First-rate, isn't it? Every article genuine.'

Bond and Regent Street, I assure you,' he added, scanning himself complacently over. *It* nodded approval; and he went on: 'You see I have had a windfall; a piece of remarkable luck; and so I thought I would escape out of the dingy smoky village and air myself for a few days in the Channel.'

'A delightful time of the year for such a purpose truly. Rather say you came to improve your acquaintance with the lady yonder, who, I daresay, will not prove ultimately inflexible.'

'Perhaps you are right—a little at least you may be, about the edges. But here we are. What do you take—port?'

'That as soon as anything else.'

Mr Gates was, as he said, constitutionally thirsty, and although it was still early in the day, drank with great relish and industry. As he grew flushed and rosy, and I therefore imagined communicative, I said: 'Well now, tell me who and what is that lady?'

The reply was a significant compound gesture, comprising a wink of his left eye and the tap of a fore-finger upon the right side of his nose. I waited, but the pantomimic action remained uninterpreted by words.

'Not rich apparently?'

'Poor as Job.'

'An imprudent marriage probably?'

'Guess again, and I'll take odds you'll guess wrong. But suppose, as variety is charming, we change the subject. What is your opinion now of the prospects of the ministry?'

I saw it was 'useless attempting to extract any information from so cunning a rascal; and hastily excusing myself, I rose, and abruptly took my leave, more and more puzzled to account for the evident connection, in some way or other,

of so fair and elegant a woman with a low attorney, struck off the rolls for fraudulent misconduct, and now acting in the name of a person scarcely less disreputable than himself. On emerging from the tavern, I found that the wind had not only sensibly abated, but had become more favourable to the packet's leaving Jersey, and that early the next morning we might reasonably hope to embark for Weymouth. It turned out as we anticipated. The same boat which took me off to the roads conveyed also the widow—Mrs Grey, I saw by the cards on her modest luggage—and her son. Gates followed a few minutes afterwards, and we were soon on our stormy voyage homewards.

The passage was a very rough, unpleasant one, and I saw little of the passengers in whom, in spite of myself, as it were, I continued to feel so strong an interest, till the steamer was moored alongside the Weymouth quay, and we stood together for a brief space, awaiting the scrutiny and questionings of the officers of the customs. I bowed adieu as I stepped from the paddle-box to the shore, and thought, with something of a feeling of regret, that in all probability I should never see either of them again. I was mistaken, for on arriving early the next morning to take possession of the outside place booked for me by the coach to London through Southampton, I found Mrs Grey and her son already seated on the roof. Gates came hurriedly a few minutes afterwards and ensconced himself snugly inside. The day was bitterly cold, and the widow and her somewhat delicate-looking boy were but poorly clad for such inclement weather. The coachman and myself, however, contrived to force some rough stout cloaks upon their acceptance, which sufficed pretty well during the day; but as night came on rainy and tempestuous as well as dark and bleak, I felt that they must be in some way or other got inside, where Gates was the only passenger. Yet so distant, so frigidly

courteous was Mrs Grey, that I was at a loss how to manage it. Gates, I saw, was enjoying himself hugely to his own satisfaction. At every stage he swallowed a large glass of brandy-and-water, and I observed that he cast more and more audaciously triumphant glances towards Mrs Grey. Once her eye, though studiously I thought averted from him, caught his, and a deep blush, in which fear, timidity, and aversion seemed strangely mingled, swept over her face. What *could* it mean? It was, however, useless to worry myself further with profitless conjectures, and I descended from the roof to hold a private parley with the coachman. A reasonable bargain was soon struck : he went to Mrs Grey and proposed to her, as there was plenty of room to spare, that she and her son should ride inside.

‘It will make no difference in the fare,’ he added, ‘and it is bitter cold out here for a lady.’

‘Thank you,’ replied the widow, after a few moments’ hesitation ; ‘we shall do very well here.’

I guessed the cause of her refusal, and hastened to add : ‘You had better, I think, accept the coachman’s proposal : the night-weather will be dreadful, and even I, a man, must take refuge inside.’ She looked at me with a sort of grateful curiosity, and then accepted, with many thanks, the coachman’s offer.

When we alighted at the Regent Circus, London, I looked anxiously but vainly round for some one in attendance to receive and greet the widow and her son. She did not seem to expect any one, but stood gazing vacantly yet sadly at the noisy, glaring, hurrying scene around her, her child’s hand clasped in hers with an unconsciously tightening grasp, whilst her luggage was removed from the roof of the coach. Gates stood near, as if in expectation that his services must now, however unwillingly, be accepted by Mrs Grey. I approached her, and said somewhat hurriedly : ‘If,

as I apprehend, madam, you are a stranger in London, and consequently in need of temporary lodgings, you will, I think, do well to apply to the person whose address I have written on this card. It is close by. He knows me, and on your mentioning my name, will treat you with every consideration. I am a police-officer; here is my address; and any assistance in my power shall, in any case'—and I glanced at Gates—'be freely rendered to you.' I then hastened off; and my wife an hour afterwards was even more anxious and interested for the mysterious widow and her son than myself.

About six weeks had glided away, and the remembrance of my fellow-passengers from Guernsey was rapidly fading into indistinctness, when a visit from Roberts, to whose lodgings I had recommended Mrs Grey, brought them once more painfully before me. That the widow was poor I was not surprised to hear; but that a person so utterly destitute of resources and friends, as she appeared from Roberts' account to be, should have sought the huge wilderness of London, seemed marvellous. Her few trinkets and nearly all her scanty wardrobe, Roberts more than suspected were at the pawnbroker's. The rent of the lodgings had not been paid for the last month, and he believed that for some time past they had not had a sufficiency of food, and were *now* in a state of literal starvation! Still, she was cold and distant as ever, complained not, though daily becoming paler, thinner, weaker.

'Does Gates the attorney visit her?' I asked.

'No—she would not see him; but letters from him are almost daily received.'

Roberts, who was a widower, wished my wife to see her: he was seriously apprehensive of some tragical result; and this, apart from considerations of humanity, could not be permitted for his own sake to occur in his house. I acqui-

cesced ; and Emily hurriedly equipped herself and set off with Roberts to Sherrard Street, Haymarket.

On arriving at home, Roberts, to his own and my wife's astonishment, found Gates there in a state of exuberant satisfaction. He was waiting to pay any claim Roberts had upon Mrs Grey, to whom, the ex-attorney exultingly announced, he was to be married on the following Thursday ! Roberts, scarcely believing his ears, hastened up to the first floor to ascertain if Mrs Grey had really given authority to Gates to act for her. He tapped at the door, and a faint voice bidding him enter, he saw at once what had happened. Mrs Grey, pale as marble, her eyes flashing with almost insane excitement, was standing by a table, upon which a large tray had been placed, covered with soups, jellies, and other delicacies, evidently just brought in from a tavern, eagerly watching her son partake of the first food he had tasted for two whole days ! Roberts saw clearly how it was, and stammering a foolish excuse of having tapped at the wrong door, hastened away. She had at last determined to sacrifice herself to save her child's life ! Emily, as she related what she had seen and heard, wept with passionate grief, and I was scarcely less excited : the union of Mrs Grey with such a man seemed like the profanation of a pure and holy shrine. Then Gates was, spite of his windfall, as he called it, essentially a needy man ! Besides—and this was the impenetrable mystery of the affair—what inducement, what motive could induce a mercenary wretch like Gates to unite himself in marriage with poverty—with destitution ? The notion of his being influenced by sentiment of any kind was, I felt, absurd. The more I reflected on the matter the more convinced I became that there was some villainous scheme in process of accomplishment by Gates, and I determined to make at least one resolute effort to arrive at a solution of the perplexing riddle. The next

day, having a few hours to spare, the thought struck me that I would call on Mrs. Grey myself. I accordingly proceeded towards her residence, and in Coventry Street happened to meet Jackson, a brother-officer, who, I was aware from a few inquiries I had previously made, knew something of Gates's past history and present position. After circumstantially relating the whole matter, I asked him if he could possibly guess what the fellow's object could be in contracting such a marriage.

'Object!' replied Jackson; 'why, money of course. What else? He has by some means become aware that the lady is entitled to property, and he is scheming to get possession of it as her husband.'

'My own conviction! Yet the difficulty of getting at any proof seems insurmountable.'

'Just so. And by the way, Gates is certainly in high feather just now, however acquired. Not only himself, but Rivers his cad—clerk he calls himself—has cast his old greasy skin, and appears quite spruce and shining. And—now I remember—what did you say was the lady's name?'

'Grey.'

'Grey! Ah, then I suppose it can have nothing to do with it! It was a person of the name of Welton or Skelton that called on us a month or two ago about Gates.'

'What was the nature of the communication?'

'I can hardly tell you: the charge was so loosely made and hurriedly withdrawn. Skelton—yes, it *was* Skelton—he resides in pretty good style at Knightsbridge—called and said that Gates had stolen a cheque or draft for five hundred pounds and other articles sent through him to some house in the City, of which I think he said the principal was dead. He was advised to apply through a solicitor to a magistrate, and went away, we supposed, for that purpose; but about three hours afterwards he returned, and in a hurried flurried

sort of way said he had been mistaken, and that he withdrew every charge he had made against Mr Gates.'

'Very odd.'

'Yes; but I don't see how it can be in any way connected with this Mrs Grey's affairs. Still, do you think it would be of any use to sound Rivers? I know the fellow well, and where I should be pretty sure to find him this evening.'

It was arranged he should do so, and I proceeded on to Sherrard Street. Mrs Grey was alone in the front apartment of the ground-floor, and received me with much politeness. She had, I saw, been weeping; her eyes were swollen and bloodshot; and she was deadly pale; but I looked in vain for any indication of that utter desolation which a woman like her, condemned to such a sacrifice, might naturally be supposed to feel. I felt greatly embarrassed as to how to begin; but at length I plunged boldly into the matter; assured her she was cruelly deceived by Gates, who was in no condition to provide for her and her son in even tolerable comfort; and that I was convinced he had no other than a mercenary and detestable motive in seeking marriage with her. Mrs Grey heard me in so totally unmoved a manner, and the feeling that I was really meddling with things that did not at all concern me, grew upon me so rapidly as I spoke to that unanswering countenance, that by the time I had finished my eloquent harangue, I was in a perfect fever of embarrassment and confusion, and very heartily wished myself out of the place. To my further bewilderment, Mrs Grey, when I had quite concluded, informed me—in consideration, she said, of the courtesies I had shewn her when we were fellow-travellers—that she was perfectly aware Mr Gates's motive in marrying her was purely a mercenary one; and her own in consenting to the union, except as regarded her son, was, she

admitted, scarcely better. She added—riddle upon riddles!—that she knew also that Mr Gates was very poor—insolvent, she understood. I rose mechanically to my feet, with a confused notion swimming in my head that both of us at all events could not be in our right senses. This feeling must have been visible upon my face; for Mrs Grey added with a half-smile: ‘You cannot reconcile these apparent contradictions; be patient; you will perfectly comprehend them before long. But as I wish not to stand too low in your estimation, I must tell you that Mr Gates is to subscribe a written agreement that we separate the instant the ceremony has been performed. But for that undertaking, I would have suffered any extremity, death itself, rather than have consented to marry him!’

Still confused, stunned as it were by what I had heard, my hand was on the handle of the door to let myself out, when a thought arose in my mind. ‘Is it possible, Mrs Grey,’ I said, ‘that you can have been deceived into a belief that such a promise, however formally set down, is of the slightest legal value?—that the law recognises, or would enforce, an instrument to render nugatory the solemn obligation you will, after signing it, make, “to love, honour, obey, and cherish your husband?”’ I had found the right chord at last. Mrs Grey, as I spoke, became deadly pale; and had she not caught at one of the heavy chairs, she would have been unable to support herself.

‘Do I understand you to say,’ she faintly and brokenly gasped, ‘that such an agreement as I have indicated, duly sealed and witnessed, could not be summarily enforced by a magistrate?’

‘Certainly it could not, my dear madam, and well Gates knows it to be so; and I am greatly mistaken in the man if, the irrevocable ceremony once over, he would not be the first to deride your credulity.’

‘If that be so,’ exclaimed the unfortunate lady with passionate despair, ‘I am indeed ruined—lost! O my darling boy, would that you and I were sleeping in your father’s quiet grave!’

‘Say not so,’ I exclaimed with emotion, for I was afflicted by her distress. ‘Honour me with your confidence, and all may yet be well.’

After much entreaty she despairingly complied. The substance of her story, which was broken by frequent outbursts of grief and lamentation, was as follows. She was the only child of a London merchant—Mr Walton we will call him—who had lived beyond his means, and failed ruinously to an immense amount. His spirits and health were broken by this event, which he survived only a few months. It happened that about the time of the bankruptcy she had become acquainted with Mr John Grey, the only son of an eminent East India merchant who was a man of penurious disposition and habits.

‘Mr Ezekiel Grey?’

The same. They became attached to each other, deeply so; and knowing that to solicit the elder Grey’s consent to their union would be tantamount to a sentence of immediate separation and estrangement, they unwisely, thoughtlessly, married about ten months after Mr Walton’s death, without the elder Grey’s knowledge. Gates, an attorney, then in apparently fair circumstances, with whom young Mr Grey had become acquainted, and Anne Crawford, Maria Walton’s servant, were the witnesses of the ceremony, which, after due publication of banns, was celebrated in St Giles’s church. The young couple after the marriage lived in the strictest privacy, the wife meagrely supported by the pocket-money allowance of Mr Ezekiel Grey to his son. Thus painfully elapsed nine years of life, when, about twelve months previous to the present time, Mr Grey determined to

send his son to Bombay, in order to the arrangement of some complicated claims on a house of agency there. It was decided that, during her husband's absence, Mrs John Grey should reside in Guernsey, partly with a view to economy, and partly for the change of air, which it was said their son required—Mr Gates to be the medium through which money and letters were to reach the wife. Mr Ezekiel Grey died somewhat suddenly about four months after his son's departure from England, and Mrs Grey had been in momentary expectation of the arrival of her husband, when Gates came to Guernsey and announced his death at Bombay, just as he was preparing for the voyage to England ! The manner of Gates was strange and insolent ; and he plainly intimated that without his assistance both herself and child would be beggars ; and that assistance he audaciously declared he would only afford at the price of marriage ! Mrs Grey, overwhelmed with grief for the loss of a husband by whom she had been as constantly as tenderly beloved, and dizzy with ill-defined apprehension, started at once for London. A copy of the will of Mr Ezekiel Grey had been procured, by which in effect he devised all his estate, real and personal, to his son ; but in the event of Mr John Grey dying unmarried or without lawful issue, it went to his wife's nephew, Mr Skelton——

‘Skelton of Knightsbridge?’

Yes : in case of Mr John Grey marrying, Skelton was to be paid an immediate legacy of five thousand pounds. So far, then, as fortune went, the widow and her son seemed amply provided for. So Mrs Grey thought, till she had another interview with Gates, who unblushingly told her that unless she consented to marry him, he would not prove, though he had abundant means of doing so, that the person she had married at St Giles's church was the son of Ezekiel Grey, the eminent merchant. ‘The name,’ said the scoundrel,

'will not help you ; there are plenty of John Greys on that register ; and as for Anne Crawford, she has been long since dead.' Mrs Grey next called on Mr Skelton, and was turned out of the house as an impostor ; and finally, having parted with everything upon which she could raise money, and Gates reiterating his offer, or demand rather, accompanied by the proposal of an immediate separation, she had consented.

'Courage, madam !' I exclaimed at the end of her narrative, of which the above is the substance, and I spoke in a tone of joyous confidence, which, more than my words, reassured her : 'I already see glimpses of daylight through this maze of villainy. Gates has played a desperate game certainly, but one which we shall, you may rely on it, easily baffle.' A knock at the door interrupted me : I peered through the blind, and saw that it was Gates. 'Silence—secrecy !' I emphatically urged in a low voice and with my finger on my lip, and left the room before the street-door could be answered ; and by my friend Roberts's contrivance, I was in a few minutes afterwards in the street, all the time unobserved by the intruder.

The next day early Jackson called on me. He had seen Rivers, but he seemed to know nothing except, indeed, that it was quite true Gates had received a five-hundred-pound draft from a house in India, which he, Rivers, had got notes for at the Bank of England. There were also in the same parcel a gold watch, he knew, and some jewellery ; but from whom it all came, he, Rivers, was ignorant. Nothing but that had Jackson been able to discover.

'Call you that nothing ?' said I, starting up, and hastily swallowing my last cup of coffee. 'It is enough, at all events, to transport William Gates, Esquire !'

I had to wait on the Commissioner that morning on special business ; and after the business upon which I had

been summoned had been despatched, I related the case of Grey *versus* Gates as clearly and succinctly as I could. He listened with great attention, and in about a quarter of an hour I left him with as clear and unmistakable a path before me as it was possible to desire. I was passing down the stairs when I was re-summoned.

‘You quite understand, Waters, that Skelton is not for a moment to be lost sight of till his deposition has been taken?’

‘Certainly, sir.’

‘That will do then.’

Arrived at home, I despatched my wife in a cab for Mrs Grey. She soon arrived, and as much as was necessary of our plan I confided to her. Mr Gates had pressed her earnestly that the ceremony should take place on the following morning. By my directions she now wrote, although her trembling fingers made an almost unintelligible scrawl of it, that as it *was* to be, she agreed to his proposition, and should expect him at nine o’clock.

Two hours afterwards, Jackson and I, having previously watched the gentleman home, knocked at Mr Skelton’s house, Knightsbridge, and requested to see him. At the very moment he came out of a side-room, and was proceeding up-stairs.

‘Mr Skelton,’ said I, stepping forward, ‘I must have a private interview with you!’ He was in an instant as pale as a corpse and shaking like an aspen—such miserable cowards does an evil conscience make men—and totteringly led the way without speaking to a small library.

‘You know me, Mr Skelton, and doubtless guess the meaning of my errand?’

He stammered out a denial, which his trembling accents and ashy countenance emphatically denied.

‘You and Gates of the Minorities are engaged in a felonious

conspiracy to deprive Mrs Grey and her infant son of their property and inheritance !’

Had he been struck by a cannon-shot, he could not have fallen more suddenly and helplessly upon the couch close to which he was standing.

Perceiving he was quite sufficiently frightened, I said : ‘There is no wish on Mrs Grey’s part to treat you harshly, so that you aid us in convicting Gates. For this purpose, you must at once give the numbers of the notes Gates obtained for the cheque, and also the letter in which the agent at Bombay announced its transmission through Gates.’

‘Yes—yes!’ he stammered, rising and going to a *secrétaire*. ‘There is the letter.’

I glanced over it. ‘I am glad to find,’ I said, ‘that you do not know by this letter that the money and other articles here enumerated had been sent by the dying husband to his wife through Gates.’

‘I most solemnly assure you I did not!’ he eagerly replied ; ‘until—until’——

‘Mr Gates informed you of it, and seduced you to conspire with him. He has been playing a double game. Whilst amusing you, he purposes marrying Mrs Grey to-morrow morning !’

‘Is it possible ? But I suspected’——

‘No doubt. In the meantime, you will, if you please, accompany us. There is every desire to spare you,’ I added, perceiving him hesitate ; ‘but our orders are peremptory.’ With a very ill grace Mr Skelton complied, and we were rapidly driven off.

The next morning Jackson, Skelton, and myself were in Sherrard Street before daybreak. Mrs Grey was already up, and at eight o’clock we sat down with her and her son to an excellent breakfast. She was charmingly dressed in the

wedding garments which Gates had purchased with her stolen money, and I almost felt it in my heart to pity the unfortunate bridegroom, rascal as he was, about to be suddenly disappointed of such a bride and such a fortune ! It was very necessary that she should be so arrayed, for, as we had thought quite probable, Rivers called a few minutes past eight with a present of jewellery, and the bride's appearance must have completely disarmed any suspicion which his master might have entertained.

Breakfast was over : Mrs Grey, with her son, was seated on a couch in the front room, and we were lying *perdu* in the next apartment, separated only by folding-doors, when a coach drew up before the house ; a bridegroom's impatient summons thundered at the door ; and presently forth stepped Mr Gates, resplendently attired, followed by his man Rivers, who was, it appeared, to give the bride away. Mr Gates entered the presence of beautiful Mrs Grey in immense triumph. He approached her with the profoundest gallantry ; and was about to speak, when Jackson and I, who had been sedulously watching through the chink of the slightly opened doors, advanced into the room, followed by Mr Skelton. His attitude of terror and surprise was one of the most natural performances I ever witnessed. He turned instinctively as if to flee. My grasp was in an instant on his collar.

'The game is up, my good Mr Gates : I arrest you for felony !'

'Felony !'

'Ay, truly. For stealing a gold watch, diamond pin, and a cheque for five hundred pounds, sent through you to this lady.'

All his insolent swagger vanished in an instant, and the abject scoundrel threw himself at Mrs Grey's feet and absolutely howled for mercy.

‘I will do anything,’ he gaspingly protested; ‘anything you require, so that you will save me from these men!’

‘Where is Crawford?’ I asked, desirous of taking immediate, but not, I hope, unfair advantage of the rascal’s terror; ‘she who witnessed this lady’s marriage?’

‘At Leamington, Warwickshire,’ he replied.

‘Very good. Now, Mrs Grey, if you will leave us, I shall be obliged. We must search this gentleman, and perhaps’—— She vanished in an instant: her gentleness of disposition was, I saw, rapidly mastering all resentment. I carried the watch we took out of Gates’s pocket to her, and she instantly recognised it to be her husband’s. A fifty and a twenty pound bank-note, corresponding to the numbers on our list, we extricated from the disappointed bridegroom’s pocket-book. ‘And now, sir, if you please,’ said I, ‘we will adjourn to your lodgings.’ A savage scowl was his only reply, not at all discomposing to me, and we were soon busy ransacking his hidden hoards. We found several other articles sent by Mr John Grey to his wife, and three letters to her, which, as corroborative evidence, would leave no doubt as to *who* her husband was. Our next visit was to a police court, where Mr William Gates was fully committed for trial. He was in due time convicted of stealing the watch, and sentenced to transportation for seven years.

Mrs Grey’s marriage and her son’s consequent succession to the deceased merchant’s wealth were not disputed.



THE MONOMANIAC.

 THE following narrative relates more to medical than to criminal history ; but as the affair came in some degree under my notice as a public officer, I have thought it might not be altogether out of place in these slight outlines of police experience. Strange and unaccountable as it may at first appear, its general truth will hardly be questioned by those who have had opportunities of observing the fantastic delusions which haunt and dominate the human brain in certain phases of mental aberration.

On arriving in London in 1831, I took lodgings at a Mr Renshawe's, in Mile-End Road, not far from the turnpike gate. My inducement to do so was partly the cheapness and neatness of the accommodation, partly that the landlord's maternal uncle, a Mr Oxley, was slightly known to me. Henry Renshawe I knew by reputation only, he having left Yorkshire ten or eleven years before, and even that knowledge was slight and vague. I had heard that a tragical event had cast a deep shadow over his after-life ; that he had been for some months the inmate of a private lunatic asylum ; and that some persons believed his brain

had never thoroughly recovered its originally healthy action. In this opinion, both my wife and myself very soon concurred; and yet I am not sure that we could have given a satisfactory reason for such belief. He was, it is true, usually kind and gentle, even to the verge of simplicity, but his general mode of expressing himself and conducting business was quite coherent and sensible; although, in spite of his resigned cheerfulness of tone and manner, it was at times quite evident, that whatever the mental hurt he had received, it had left a rankling, perhaps remorseful, sting behind. A small, well-executed portrait in his sitting-room suggested a conjecture of the nature of the calamity which had befallen him. It was that of a fair, mild-eyed, very young woman, but of a pensive, almost mournful, cast of features, as if the coming event, briefly recorded in the lower right-hand corner of the painting, had already, during life and health, cast its projecting shadow over her. That brief record was this: 'Laura Hargreaves, born 1804; drowned 1821.' No direct allusion to the picture ever passed his lips in my hearing, although, from being able to chat together of Yorkshire scenes and times, we speedily became excellent friends. Still, there were not wanting, from time to time, significant indications, though difficult to place in evidence, that the fire of insanity had not been wholly quenched, but still smouldered and glowed beneath the habit-hardened crust which concealed it from the careless or casual observer. Exciting circumstances, not very long after my arrival in the metropolis, unfortunately kindled those brief wild sparkles into a furious and consuming flame.

Mr Renshawe was in fair circumstances—that is, his income, derived from funded property alone, was nearly three hundred pounds a year; but his habits were close, thrifty, almost miserly. His personal appearance was neat

and gentlemanly, but he kept no servant. A charwoman came once a day to arrange his chamber, and perform other household work, and he usually dined, very simply, at a coffee-house or tavern. His house, with the exception of a sitting and bed room, was occupied by lodgers; amongst these was a pale, weakly-looking young man of the name of Irwin. He was suffering from pulmonary consumption—a disease induced, I was informed, by his careless folly in remaining in his wet clothes after having assisted, during the greater part of the night, at a large fire at a coach-factory. His trade was in gold and silver lace-work—bullion for epaulets, and so on; and as he had a good connection with several West-end establishments, his business appeared to be a thriving one; so much so, that he usually employed several assistants of both sexes. He occupied the first floor, and a workshop at the end of the garden. His wife, a pretty-featured, well-formed, graceful young woman, of not more than two or three and twenty, was, they told me, the daughter of a schoolmaster, and certainly had been gently and carefully nurtured. They had one child, a sprightly, curly-haired, bright-eyed boy, nearly four years old. The wife, Ellen Irwin, was reputed to be a first-rate hand at some of the lighter parts of her husband's business; and her efforts to lighten his toil, and compensate by increased exertion for his daily diminishing capacity for labour, were unwearying and incessant. Never have I seen a more gentle, thoughtful tenderness than was displayed by that young wife towards her suffering and sometimes not quite evenly tempered partner, who, however, let me add, appeared to reciprocate truthfully her affection; all the more so, perhaps, that he knew their time together upon earth was already shrunk to a brief span. In my opinion, Ellen Irwin was a handsome, even an elegant young person: this, however, is in some degree a matter of taste. But no

one could deny that the gentle kindness, the beaming compassion, that irradiated her features as she tended the fast-sinking invalid, rendered her at such times absolutely beautiful—*angelised* her, to use an expression of my wife's, with whom she was a prime favourite. I was self-debating for about the twentieth time one evening, where it was I had formerly seen her, with that sad, mournful look of hers; for seen her I was sure I had, and not long since either. It was late; I had just returned home; my wife was in the sick-room, and I had entered it with two or three oranges. 'Oh, now I remember,' I suddenly exclaimed, just above my breath; 'the picture in Mr Renshawe's room! What a remarkable coincidence!'

A low, chuckling laugh close at my elbow caused me to turn quickly towards the door. Just within the threshold stood Mr Renshawe, looking like a white stone-image rather than a living man, but for the fierce sparkling of his strangely gleaming eyes, and the mocking, triumphant curl of his lips. 'You, too, have at last observed it, then?' he muttered, faintly echoing the under-tone in which I spoke. 'I have known the truth for many weeks.' The manner, the expression, not the words, quite startled me. At the same moment a cry of women rang through the room, and I immediately seized Mr Renshawe by the arm, and drew him forcibly away, for there was that in his countenance which should not meet the eyes of a dying man.

'What were you saying? What truth have you known for weeks?' I asked as soon as we had reached his sitting-room.

Before he could answer, another wailing sound ascended from the sick-room. Lightning leaped from Renshawe's lustrous, dilated eyes, and the exulting laugh again, but louder, burst from his lips. 'Ha! ha!' he fiercely exclaimed. 'I know that cry! It is Death's—Death's!

Thrice-blessed Death, whom I have so often ignorantly cursed ! But that,' he added quickly, and peering sharply in my face, 'was when, as you know, people said'—and he ground his teeth with rage—'people said I was crazed—mad !'

'What can you mean by this wild talk, my friend ?' I replied in as unconcerned and quieting a tone as I could immediately assume. 'Come, sit down : I was asking the meaning of your strange words below, just now.'

'The meaning of my words ? You know as well as I do. Look there !'

'At the painting ? Well ?'

'You have seen the original,' he went on with the same excited tone and gestures. 'It crossed me like a flash of lightning. Still, it is strange she does not know me. I am sure she does not ! But I am changed, no doubt—sadly changed !' he added, dejectedly, as he looked in a mirror.

'Can you mean that I have seen Laura Hargreaves here ?' I stammered, thoroughly bewildered. 'She who was drowned ten or eleven years ago ?'

'To be sure—to be sure ! It was so believed, I admit, by everybody—by myself, and the belief drove me mad ! And yet, I now remember, when at times I was calm—when the pale face, blind staring eyes, and dripping hair, ceased for a while to pursue and haunt me, the low, sweet voice and gentle face came back, and I knew she lived, though all denied it. But look ; it is her very image !' he added fiercely, his glaring eyes flashing from the portrait to my face alternately.

'Whose image ?'

'Whose image !—Why, Mrs Irwin's, to be sure. You yourself admitted it just now.' I was so confounded, that for several minutes I remained stupidly and silently staring

at the man. At length I said ; ' Well, there *is* a likeness, though not so great as I imagined '——

' It is false ! ' he broke in furiously. ' It is her very self.'

' We 'll talk of that to-morrow. ' You are ill, over-excited, and must go to bed. I hear Dr Garland's voice below : he shall come to you.'

' No—no—no ! ' he almost screamed. ' Send me no doctors ; I hate doctors ! But I 'll go to bed—since—since *you* wish it ; but no doctors ! Not for the world ! ' As he spoke, he shrank coweringly backwards, out of the room ; his wavering, unquiet eyes fixed upon mine as long as we remained within view of each other : a moment afterwards I heard him dart into his chamber and bolt and double-lock the door.

It was plain that lunacy, but partially subdued, had resumed its former mastery over the unfortunate gentleman. But what an extraordinary delusion ! I took a candle, and examined the picture with renewed curiosity. It certainly bore a strong resemblance to Mrs Irwin : the brown, curling hair, the pensive eyes, the pale fairness of complexion, were the same ; but it was scarcely more girlish, more youthful, than the young matron was now, and the original, had she lived, would have been by this time approaching to thirty years of age ! I went softly down-stairs, and found, as I feared, that George Irwin was gone. My wife came weeping out of the death-chamber, accompanied by Dr Garland, to whom I forthwith related what had just taken place. He listened with attention and interest ; and after some sage observations upon the strange fancies which now and then take possession of the minds of monomaniacs, agreed to see Mr Renshawe at ten the next morning. I was not required upon duty till eleven ; and if it were in the physician's opinion desirable, I was to write at once to the patient's uncle, Mr Oxley.

Mr Renshawe was, I heard, stirring before seven o'clock, and the charwoman informed me that he had taken his breakfast as usual, and appeared to be in cheerful, almost high spirits. The physician was punctual. I tapped at the sitting-room door, and was desired to come in. Mr Renshawe was seated at a table with some papers before him, evidently determined to appear cool and indifferent. He could not, however, repress a start of surprise, almost of terror, at the sight of the physician, and a paleness, followed by a hectic flush, passed quickly over his countenance. I observed, too, that the portrait was turned with its face towards the wall.

By a strong effort Mr Renshawe regained his simulated composure, and in reply to Dr Garland's professional inquiry as to the state of his health, said with a forced laugh: 'My friend Waters has, I suppose, been amusing you with the absurd story that made him stare so last night. It is exceedingly droll, I must say, although many persons, otherwise acute enough, cannot, except upon reflection, comprehend a jest. There was John Kemble the tragedian, for instance, who'——

'Never mind John Kemble, my dear sir,' interrupted Dr Garland. 'Do, pray, tell us the story over again. I love an amusing jest.'

Mr Renshawe hesitated for an instant, and then said with reserve, almost dignity of manner: 'I do not know, sir'—his face, by the way, was determinedly averted from the cool, searching gaze of the physician—'I do not know, sir, that I am obliged to find you in amusement; and as your presence here was not invited, I shall be obliged by your leaving the room as quickly as may be.'

'Certainly—certainly, sir. I am exceedingly sorry to have intruded, but I am sure you will permit me to have a peep at this wonderful portrait.'

Renshawe sprang impulsively forward to prevent the doctor reaching it. He was too late; and Dr Garland, turning sharply round with the painting in his hand, literally transfixed him in an attitude of surprise and consternation. Like the Ancient Mariner, he held him by his glittering eye, but the spell was not an enduring one. 'Truly,' remarked Dr Garland, as he found the kind of mesmeric influence he had exerted beginning to fail, 'not so *very* bad a chance resemblance, especially about the eyes and mouth'——

'This is very extraordinary conduct,' broke in Mr Renshawe; 'and I must again request that you will both leave the room.'

It was useless to persist, and we almost immediately went away. 'Your impression, Mr Waters,' said the physician as he was leaving the house, 'is, I daresay, the true one; but he is on his guard now, and it will be prudent to wait for a fresh outbreak before acting decisively; more especially as the hallucination appears to be quite a harmless one.'

This was not, I thought, quite so sure, but of course I acquiesced, as in duty bound; and matters went on pretty much as usual for seven or eight weeks, except that Mr Renshawe manifested much aversion towards myself personally, and at last served me with a written notice to quit at the end of the term previously stipulated for. There was still some time to that; and in the meanwhile I caused a strict watch to be set, as far as was practicable, without exciting observation upon our landlord's words and acts.

Ellen Irwin's first tumult of grief subsided, the next and pressing question related to her own and infant son's subsistence. An elderly man of the name of Tomlins was engaged as foreman; and it was hoped the business might still be carried on with sufficient profit. Mr Renshawe's manner, though at times indicative of considerable nervous

irritability, was kind and respectful to the young widow ; and I began to hope that the delusion he had for a while laboured under had finally passed away.

The hope was a fallacious one. We were sitting at tea on a Sunday evening, when Mrs Irwin, pale and trembling with fright and nervous agitation, came hastily in with her little boy in her hand. I correctly divined what had occurred. In reply to my hurried questioning, the astounded young matron told me in substance, that within the last two or three days Mr Renshawe's strange behaviour and disjointed talk had both bewildered and alarmed her. He vaguely intimated that she, Ellen Irwin, was really Laura somebody else—that she had kept company with him, Mr Renshawe, in Yorkshire, before she knew poor George—with many other strange things he muttered rather than spoke out ; and especially that it was owing to her son reminding her continually of his father, that she pretended not to have known Mr Renshawe twelve or thirteen years ago. 'In short,' added the young woman with tears and blushes, 'he is utterly crazed ; for he asked me just now to marry him—which I would not do for the Indies—and is gone away in a passion to find a paper that will prove, he says, I am that other Laura something.'

There was something so ludicrous in all this, however vexatious and insulting under the circumstances—the recent death of the husband, and the young widow's unprotected state—that neither of us could forbear laughing at the conclusion of Mrs Irwin's story. It struck me, too, that Renshawe had conceived a real and ardent passion for the very comely and interesting person before us—first prompted, no doubt, by her accidental likeness to the portrait ; and that some mental flaw or other caused him to confound her with the Laura who had in early life excited the same emotion in his mind.

Laughable as the matter was in one sense, there was—and the fair widow had noticed as well as myself—a serious menacing expression in the man's eye not to be trifled with, and at her earnest request, we accompanied her to her own apartment, to which Renshawe had threatened soon to return. We had not been a minute in the room, when his hurried step was heard approaching, and Mrs Waters and I stepped hastily into an adjoining closet, where we could hear and partly see all that passed. Renshawe's speech trembled with fervency and anger as he broke at once into the subject, with which his disordered brain was reeling.

'You will not dare to say, will you, that you do not remember this song—that these pencil-marks in the margin were not made by you thirteen years ago?' he menacingly ejaculated.

'I know nothing about the song, Mr Renshawe,' rejoined the young woman with more spirit than she might have exhibited but for my near presence. 'It is really such nonsense. Thirteen years ago, I was only about nine years of age.'

'You persist, then, unfeeling woman, in this cruel deception! After all, too, that I have suffered; the days of gloom, the nights of horror, since that fearful moment when I beheld you dragged, a lifeless corpse, from the water, and they told me you were dead!'

'Dead! Gracious goodness, Mr Renshawe, don't go on in this shocking way! I was never dragged out of a pond, nor supposed to be dead—never! You quite frighten one.'

'Then, you and I, your sister, and that thrice-accursed Bedford, did not, on the 7th of August 1821, go for a sail on the piece of water at Lowfield, and the skiff was not, in the deadly, sudden, jealous strife between him and me, accidentally upset? But I know how it is: it is this brat, and the memories he recalls, that'——

Mrs Irwin screamed, and I stepped sharply into the room. The grasp of the lunatic was on the child's throat. I loosed it somewhat roughly, throwing him off with a force that brought him to the ground. He rose quickly, glared at me with tiger-like ferocity, and then darted out of the room. The affair had become serious; and the same night I posted a letter to Yorkshire, informing Mr Oxley of what had occurred, and suggesting the propriety of his immediately coming to London. Measures were also taken for securing Mrs Irwin and her son from molestation.

But the cunning of lunacy is not easily baffled. On returning home the fourth evening after the despatch of my letter, I found the house and immediate neighbourhood in the wildest confusion. My own wife was in hysterics; Mrs Irwin, I was told by half-a-dozen tongues at once, was dying; and the frightful cause of all was, that little George Irwin, a favourite with everybody, had in some unaccountable manner fallen into the river Lea and been drowned. This, at least, was the general conviction, although the river had been dragged to no purpose—the poor child's black beaver-hat and feather having been discovered floated to the bank, a considerable way down the stream. The body, it was thought, had been carried out into the Thames by the force of the current.

A terrible suspicion glanced across my mind. 'Where is Mr Renshaw?' I asked. Nobody knew. He had not been seen since five o'clock—about the time, I soon ascertained, that the child was missed. I had the house cleared as quickly as possible of the numerous gossips that crowded it, and then sought a conference with Dr Garland, who was with Mrs Irwin. The distracted mother had, I found, been profusely bled and cupped, and it was hoped that brain-fever, which had been apprehended, would not ensue. The physician's suspicions pointed the same way as mine; but he

declined committing himself to any advice, and I was left to act according to my own discretion. I was new to such matters at that time—unfortunately so, as it proved, or the affair might have had a less painful issue.

Tomlins and I remained up, waiting for the return of Mr Renshawe; and as the long slow hours limped past, the night-silence only broken by the dull moaning, and occasional spasmodic screams of poor Mrs Irwin, I grew very much excited. The prolonged absence of Mr Renshawe confirmed my impressions of his guilt, and I determined to tax him with it, and take him into custody the instant he appeared. It was two in the morning before he did so; and the nervous fumbling, for full ten minutes, with his latch-key, before he could open the door, quite prepared me for the spectral-like aspect he presented on entering. He had met somebody, it afterwards appeared, outside, who had assured him that the mother of the drowned child was either dead or dying. He never drank, I knew, but he staggered as if intoxicated; and after he had with difficulty reached the head of the stairs, in reply to my question as to where he had been, he could only stutter with white trembling lips: ‘It—it—cannot be—be true—that Lau—that Mrs Irwin is—dying?’

‘Quite true, Mr Renshawe,’ I very imprudently replied, and in much too loud a tone, for we were but a few paces from Mrs Irwin’s bedroom door. ‘And if, as I suspect, the child has been drowned by you, you will have before long two murders on your head.’

A choking bubbling noise came from the wretched man’s throat, and his shaking fingers vainly strove to loosen his neck-tie. At the same moment, I heard a noise, as of struggling, in the bedroom, and the nurse’s voice in eager remonstrance. I instantly made a movement towards Mr Renshawe, with a view to loosen his cravat—his features being

frightfully convulsed, and, to get him out of the way as quickly as possible, for I guessed what was about to happen—when he, mistaking my intention, started back, turned half round, and found himself confronted by Mrs Irwin, her pale features and white night-dress dabbled with blood, in consequence of a partial disturbance of the bandages in struggling with the nurse—a terrifying ghastly sight even to me; to him utterly overwhelming, and scarcely needing her frenzied execrations on the murderer of her child to deprive him utterly of all remaining sense and strength. He suddenly reeled, threw his arms wildly into the air, and before I could stretch forth my hand to save him, fell heavily backwards from the edge of the steep stairs, where he was standing, to the bottom. Tomlins and I hastened to his assistance, lifted him up, and as we did so a jet of blood gushed from his mouth; he had likewise received a terrible wound near the right temple, from which the life-stream issued copiously.

We got him to bed: Dr Garland and a neighbouring surgeon were soon with us, and prompt remedies were applied. It was a fruitless labour. Day had scarcely dawned before he heard from the physician's lips that life with him was swiftly ebbing to its close. He was perfectly conscious and collected. Happily there was no stain of murder on his soul: he had merely enticed the child away, and placed him, under an ingenious pretence, with an acquaintance at Camden-Town; and by this time both he and his mother were standing, awe-struck and weeping, by Henry Renshaw's death-bed. He had thrown the child's hat into the river, and his motive in thus acting appeared to have been a double one. In the first place, because he thought the boy's likeness to his father was the chief obstacle to Mrs Irwin's toleration of his addresses; and next to bribe her into compliance by a promise to restore her son.

But he could not be deemed accountable for his actions. 'I think,' he murmured brokenly, 'that the delusion was partly self-cherished, or of the Evil One. I observed the likeness long before, but it was not till the—the husband was dying, that the idea fastened itself upon my aching brain, and grew there. But the world is passing: forgive me—Ellen—Laura'—— He was dead!

The inquest on the cause of death returned, of course, that it was 'accidental;' but I long regretted that I had not been less precipitate, though perhaps all was for the best—for the sufferer as well as others. Mr Oxley had died some five weeks previously. This I found from Renshaw's will, where it was recited as a reason that, having no relative alive for whom he cared, his property was bequeathed to Guy's Hospital, charged with a hundred pounds a year to Ellen Irwin, as long as she lived unmarried. The document was perfectly coherent; and although written during the height of his monomania, contained not a word respecting the identity of the youthful widow and the Laura whose sad fate had first unsettled the testator's reason.



THE HONOUR OF HONESTY.



WHEN shall I get a new bonnet?' doubtfully soliloquised a young serving-girl, who, in a dismal back garret, where a great baby was sleeping, was despondingly considering her head-gear, as she prepared to go out one Saturday evening. She might be excused for reflecting on the subject; for the coarse straw bonnet—which had never been handsome—was now sunburnt and dirty, and with its soiled and faded ribbon, looked hardly neat, though it had been carefully kept. 'I declare I'm almost ashamed to go to church in it, it's so dirty,' she continued, as she turned it round in her hand; 'though maybe it's of a piece with my gown and shawl: but come, they're not dirty neither. I wonder whether mother can spare me my wages this week? Perhaps she can: I know she was sure of work last Saturday: well, we'll see.' So saying, she tied on the shabby bonnet, and carefully folding up two shillings, which she took from the window ledge, she put them into her pocket; and giving a last glance at her little bed, to see that her baby bedfellow was safely tucked in, she hurried out of the

room and out of the house, away on her weekly visit to her family.

Bessie Abbott was a pretty, pleasant-looking girl of nearly eighteen, strong, active, and industrious. She was the daughter of a worthless man and an excellent woman. The teaching of the latter had borne good fruit in Bessie, who, though only a drudge in the family of a little shopkeeper, was a neat and excellent servant, as far as her knowledge went; while her integrity and good-temper would have rendered her valuable in any situation. She was in the receipt of what she considered the handsome income of two shillings a week, for which, with board and lodging, she did everything in her employer's house; for its mistress was constantly engaged in the shop, and left the whole care of her five children, as well as all the household work, to 'Pretty Bessie;' and never was burden laid upon a more willing worker. Bessie's father did little for the support of his household: he spent half his time and more than half his earnings in the beer-shop; and the little money left for his wife did hardly more than supply his board: sometimes, indeed, he even demanded food when he had given no means of procuring it. The burden of the family of course fell wholly on his poor wife, who was a quick and dexterous needlewoman, and who was glad to obtain any species of work by which she might earn a little; for her supply from the tailors, who were her usual employers, was not very regular, and sometimes failed altogether for a time.

Bessie was the eldest of a large family: the two next in age to herself, a boy and girl of fifteen and thirteen, were both well placed, though neither could contribute to the family income; but there were seven still younger, entirely dependant on their poor mother's exertions. Such being the circumstances of the household, we need not wonder that a

girl so affectionate as Bessie, should have felt very doubtful of the possibility of buying a new bonnet; for, unlike too many in her situation, she never felt that her money was her own if it were needed for her mother's use, and was only happy in the thought that she was enabled to contribute to that mother's comfort; and in this respect her natural feelings were aided by higher principles, implanted by Him who so severely censured the unfilial conduct of the professing Jews.

As Bessie hurried along the streets to her mother's house, which was on the other side of the town, she cast many a wistful glance towards the displays of bonnets and ribbons in the shop windows, and even paused once or twice to bestow particular admiration: nay, she went so far as to decide what shape she would buy and how it should be trimmed, if she could but get the money for it; and she had strong hope of being able to do this, because she knew her mother had been promised more work than she could accomplish for several weeks to come. At last Bessie reached her home, which was one ill-lighted room, with a dark closet adjoining, in a tumble-down old house, situated in one of the courts of a densely populated neighbourhood, and tenanted by five or six families besides the Abbotts. It was *home*, however, and Bessie felt that it was so, as, after running up the tottering stairs, she opened the door of her mother's room, which, if not very comfortable, was at least very clean.

'O Bessie, Bessie!—here is Bessie!' cried a posse of little ones as she entered. 'Here is Bessie come, mother! Come to mother, Bessie; she's crying!' and two of the young things seized their darling sister by her dress, and pulled her forward, as though at her coming their mother's tears must dry.

'What *is* the matter, mother dear?' cried Bessie,

frightened, as she approached a neat, careworn woman, who, with her hands convulsively pressed together, and silent tears dropping from her eyes, looked absorbed in hopeless distress.

‘Bessie, Bessie, what shall we do?’ she exclaimed, as her daughter knelt and threw her arms round her: ‘what will become of us?’

‘O mother, what is the matter? What has happened?’ returned Bessie, her own tears beginning to flow in sympathy and alarm. ‘O dear! I thought to find you all so comfortable to-night!’

‘Ay, and so we might have been,’ answered the mother in a tone of heart-broken despondency—‘only for him—for your father, Bessie! How could he do it?’

‘Mother, mother, what *has* he done?’ exclaimed the terrified girl, all horrible visions of crime starting up before her.

‘He has taken away my work, Bessie—my work, that I hoped to get so much for—and he has pawned it for drink—I don’t know where; and he beat me like a dog when I begged of him to tell me where it was. And the master wanted it, and I hadn’t it for him; and oh, he was angry—and no wonder; only it’s hard upon me, Bessie. And he says the waistcoats are worth two pounds, and he’ll have them or their worth if he takes my bed from under me. Then I owe our landlord for a fortnight’s rent; for I didn’t pay last week, thinking I should be so much better off this. And I haven’t a penny in the house for the children’s food; they’ve been nigh famished as it is, for the waistcoats were almost the first work I did. And now where I am to look for money or work I don’t know, or how I am ever to pay this dreadful debt: my poor little ones will all be starving about me. How shall I bear it? And then to think who has brought all this upon me. O Bessie, it almost breaks my heart!’

'This is trouble indeed, indeed,' sobbed poor Bessie, as she leant against her mother's shoulder: 'I little thought of finding you like this as I came along. But, mother dear, you mustn't be quite cast down: put your trust in your heavenly Father, without whose knowledge not a sparrow falleth to the ground.'

'Ay, Bessie dear; but it's hard to put such trust in Him, when nothing but trouble is to be seen. I'm sure I try; but it's very hard, my child.'

'Yes, it is hard, mother; yet who else shall we trust in? And, mother, here are my wages for to-day and to-morrow, and who knows what Monday may bring? Aren't we bid, in such times as these to take no thought for the morrow, for sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof?'

Mrs Abbott pressed her child more closely without reply, and those of the children who were old enough to understand what passed, gathered reverently round to listen to Bessie's words, as she continued her attempts to console her mother. Nearly an hour passed in this manner; and at last Bessie's earnest hopeful persuasions so far prevailed on her mother as to excite a feeling of trustful resignation; and with lighter heart the girl began the children's Saturday night's ablutions, while her mother went out to make the necessary purchases of food; and when, on the return of the latter, the hungry little ones were regaled with a large piece of bread, trouble seemed for a while forgotten. However, Bessie, when she had, as she expressed it, 'cleaned all up,' was obliged to depart; and after a tearful adieu, she was once more hurrying through the streets, which she had so lately traversed with such different feelings. 'Boast not thyself of to-morrow,' she mused as she reached her abode. 'We may well always remember that: we little thought last week when we were so pleased about the work what trouble it would bring.'

Sunday morning came, and the sound of pleasant bells ; but to Bessie it differed from other mornings only so far as her own thought made a Sabbath around her, for she could not go out until the evening ; and she had even more to do on that day than on the other six, especially as her mistress, who rarely attended church herself, was always at hand to find fault. Many were the sad thoughts she bestowed on her mother's troubles during the day ; and when at last she was able to set out for church, under strict injunctions to return immediately on the close of the service, she was depressed in spirits more than she had ever before felt in her life.

The service came to a close, and Bessie in a quiet mind left the church, and slowly and thoughtfully walked homewards. She was one of the last who came out ; and as she walked across the wide churchyard to the least frequented gate, she struck her foot against something, which yielded to her step and returned a rattling sound. She stooped to pick up the object, and it proved a well-filled purse ; the bright beads and tassels glittered in the half light of an autumn evening, and its weight and rotundity shewed it well supplied. Bessie stood positively breathless for a moment in the excess of her joy ; she felt a dizzy rush in her head, and for a moment all surrounding objects seemed to swim before her ; then clasping her hands in a mute aspiration of thankfulness, she recovered full possession of her faculties, and began to examine the treasure.

'One, two, three, four, five, six, seven !' she counted—'seven pounds ! Oh, to think of mother, how delighted she will be ! Why, this will pay all, and buy I can't tell what beside. Oh, how happy I am ! And what is this ?' she continued, as she took from the other end a roll of soft paper. 'Why, these must be bank-notes, like that mis'ess gave change for once : why, they must be worth I can't tell

how much. Here are one, two, three, four of them, and that one mis'ess got was worth five pounds itself. What shall we do with so much money? I'll read what's on these notes, however.' So, approaching a lamp just inside the gate, she with some difficulty deciphered the amounts of the notes, of which two were for fifty pounds, the other two respectively for five-and-twenty. 'It's quite a fortune,' she murmured in a low, reverential tone, as she tried to grasp the idea of so many pounds. 'What a happy thing for me, and how sad for the person who lost it!' Here the current of Bessie's rapturous thoughts received a sudden check; the smile faded from her lips, and she remained silently looking on the pretty purse with a perplexity amounting to distress. 'O me, but it is not mine!' she continued, her thoughts finding vent in a half-articulate form. 'This belongs to somebody, who is as sorry to lose it as I am pleased to find it. Oh, what must I do? I wish I had never seen it. Must I give it up just when we want it so? And then it was lying in my way, and nobody near who could have dropped it.' Poor Bessie! the struggle between conscience and want was very severe. She tried hard for a little while to convince herself that she had a right to what she found on a highway, but her principles were too strong to allow of such self-deception; and besides, in testing the matter by the golden rule, she felt that if she had dropped her two shillings on the previous night, she should have been very indignant with any finder claiming a right to them. 'No, I have no business with it indeed,' she murmured, as the tears of disappointment started to her eyes. 'But, however, surely I may keep just one or two of these pounds?—the person who lost this must be very rich, and would never miss them; surely I may have just two pounds for my finding it, and that would put poor mother out of her trouble?' Just at this moment these words, which she had lately

heard, darted into her mind like a gleam of light, 'Thou, God, seest me!' 'Oh, what am I thinking of?' she exclaimed, frightened by her own thoughts: 'isn't it all just one as stealing? Let me put this out of my sight as soon as I can, lest I should be too much tempted: I won't keep it an hour.' So, resolutely concealing the temptation, Bessie set off at her quickest pace to the police-station, where she resolved to deposit the money immediately, for the twofold purpose of securing herself against temptation, and of affording the owner the best opportunity for recovering the lost property. When she told her errand to the officer at the station, he looked at her from head to foot with some surprise.

'So you didn't think of keeping it yourself?' he asked as he took the purse.

'Yes, sir, I did for a minute, for we want it bad enough,' replied Bessie with an ingenuous blush; 'but I was kept from it, thank God! There's a deal of money there, sir; will you please to count it, that you may know, when it's owned, that I took none?'

The officer counted it accordingly, and gave her a receipt for the amount, taking down her address at the same time, which she thought nothing about; then, with a thankful, happy heart and clear conscience, she hastened home.

Frequently, during the labours of the next day, Bessie wondered whether the owner of the purse had regained it, and pleased herself in imagining the pleasure its recovery must have caused. Then her thoughts sadly turned to her poor mother, and she would speculate on the possibility of her receiving a reward. Some one she knew had been rewarded with ten shillings for finding a five-pound note; perhaps she might have a pound given her. However, she sedulously endeavoured to withdraw her thoughts from the subject, and occupied them in the attempt to devise some

means of earning a little money in the family somehow, to carry them through this terrible crisis. So passed Monday, and Tuesday was passing in a similar manner. Bessie was busily washing her kitchen floor—talking to amuse the baby, who was tied in a chair in one corner of it, and thinking over a brilliant plan which had just occurred to her, of proposing one of her brothers as errand-boy to the grocer round the corner, when her mistress looked in, and sharply said some one wanted to speak to her. In great haste and surprise Bessie started up, and as quickly as possible wiped her wet hands, threw off her apron, settled her gown and cap, and hurried into the shop, where she found a middle-aged gentleman, of very pleasant demeanour, leaning carelessly against the counter. He turned as she entered, and advanced a step as she courtesied and looked, as if to inquire the object of his visit.

‘Your name is Elizabeth Abbott?’ he asked: ‘is it not?’

‘Yes, sir,’ was Bessie’s reply.

‘You found a purse on Sunday night, I believe?’

‘Yes, sir,’ she replied, colouring as she spoke. ‘Did it belong to you, sir? Did you get it? I hope it was all right, sir! I got a note of the money at the police,’ continued Bessie, speaking rapidly, and as if half-frightened; for just then she only remembered the possibility of some money being missing, which might be demanded of her.

‘O yes, all was right,’ returned the gentleman smiling. ‘I only came to see what made you return my purse so honestly and quickly. Were you not in want of money?’

‘O indeed, sir, yes!’ she emphatically replied, as tears filled her eyes; ‘but that money was not ours.’

‘Perhaps you were afraid to keep it, lest it should be discovered?’ continued her interrogator, looking earnestly at her, as a deep crimson flush rose even to her forehead.

. She raised her eyes to his boldly, though modestly, as she answered, in all the firmness of truth : ‘Sir, I never thought of that. But I would not be so miserable as theft would make me for as much again as is in your purse, sir!’

‘That is well, that is well,’ quietly replied the gentleman with a satisfied smile. ‘Now you say you want money very much : I came here to offer you a reward for the return of my purse. How much would you wish me to give you?’

‘O sir!’ exclaimed poor Bessie in a transport of delight, clasping her hands—‘oh, thank you! thank you! Two pounds, sir, if you could be so kind, would make us all happy again!’

‘It would not be buying happiness very dearly,’ answered the stranger; ‘but let me hear what you would do with the two pounds.’

Accordingly, Bessie related her simple little history as the reader knows it. At its conclusion, her attentive listener smiled kindly. ‘You are a good girl, Bessie,’ he said. ‘Well, the reward I shall give you is twenty pounds instead of two. I determined upon this if I were satisfied with your answers.’

Bessie was speechless in grateful astonishment.

‘Yes, it is a little fortune for you,’ said the gentleman, answering her look. ‘You will of course relieve your mother from her trouble, and you had better put the rest into the savings-bank, and try to add a little to it, as a provision in case of need.’ So saying, the gentleman produced the identical beaded purse, and counted twenty sovereigns into Bessie’s hand, while she could only look her thanks; and then he went, and Bessie hurried up to her little room to give vent to her grateful happiness, thinking how different would have been her feelings had she otherwise acted.

I need not make my story longer by describing the joy

excited by her next visit to her home—how the debt was paid—and how one pound more was devoted to the purchase of sundry articles of comfort and decency (amongst which Bessie's bonnet was not forgotten)—and how the remaining pounds were safely deposited. But I must not omit to add, that the gentleman whose acquaintance Bessie had so happily made, did not forget her. Though his residence was many miles distant from hers, she was shortly afterwards taken into his family as nurse, which post she filled in comfort and respectability for many years, carefully impressing upon the minds of her young charges the same principles which governed her own.



THE IDIOT GIRL.

 **P**IERRE LE ROUX'S humble habitation was situated on the banks of the Meuse, just where it winds its way through a chasm in the chain of the Ardennes, between tall cliffs composed chiefly of slate, and crowned with forests of dark and gloomy pine. It was a lonely spot, yet had many charms for its inmates, some of whom had never known any other home.

Pierre had been a soldier of the Empire, and was still a young man when his military career was unexpectedly closed by the fall of Napoleon, whom, like most of his companions in arms, he regarded with unbounded veneration. For a while Pierre led an unsettled roving life; but when a few years were past, he married a village girl of that neighbourhood, and fixed himself, as he imagined, for life upon a small farm near the picturesque town of Fermay. Adèle was a guileless, merry-hearted girl, and withal a thrifty manager, so that Pierre had no cause to repent his choice; and never was there a happier countenance than his when, at the close of a long day's toil, he seated himself by the side of the blazing log which glowed upon his hearth, and saw his wife and children gathered around him. During these twilight hours Adèle's hand was ever busy with her distaff, while she listened to her goodman's tales

of glory, which he would recite with his snuff-box in hand, modelled after the *Petit Caporal's* cocked-hat, and upon which he usually bestowed an emphatic tap at the most striking parts of his story.

For a time all prospered with Pierre and Adèle. Their crops were good; their children handsome, healthy, and dutiful; and their later years had been blessed with the gift of a lovely boy, much younger than any of his ten brothers and sisters, of whom, as well as of his parents, he was the plaything and the darling. At the evening fire-side the little André used to climb up on his father's knee, and listen with such glee to his recital of perilous adventures and daring exploits, that the father would sometimes clap him on the shoulder, saying, with a smile: 'Ah, *petit coquin!* my life on it, thou, too, wilt be a soldier. Yes, thou shalt fight for France—*La belle France! Vive la France!*'—and the boy's eyes sparkled with pleasure on hearing his father's words, although their meaning could be but dimly apprehended by his infant ears.

On these occasions Adèle was wont to shake her head gravely, and say: 'No, no, my child; thou shalt cultivate the soil like thy father, and stay at home and take care of us in our old days;' to which her husband would quickly rejoin: 'Thou dost forget, *ma petite femme*, that I was a soldier first.' And so the discussion ended.

Pierre and Adèle had no near neighbours except a fisherman's family, whose circumstances were poorer than their own, and to whom they were sometimes able to lend a kindly and a helpful hand. Among Louis Bochart's children was one named Annette, whose intellect had during her early infancy been weakened by a violent attack of fever, which also affected her faculty of hearing as well as of speech, so that it was not without difficulty that she contrived to maintain any sort of communication with her fellow-

creatures. Annette's countenance was but too plainly marked with the stamp of idiocy ; yet it bore a shade of melancholy which left the beholder doubtful how far the inward stream of thought might be flowing on, while its outward manifestation had been checked and destroyed. Her large dark eyes, wandering and restless though they were, bore an expression of gentleness and love which called forth the kindly sympathies of those who knew her ; and through her docile obedience, she contrived to lighten her mother's daily burden by doing many little offices in the household ; for Annette was the only daughter among a family of many sons. She delighted also in soothing those who were in trouble, and seemed to have an instinctive knowledge of the approach of sorrow or of evil to those she loved ; so that before any other eye could detect a rising cloud upon the brow of one who was dear to her, Annette would be seated on a low stool at their side, and by a silent kiss imprinted on their hand, would give assurance of her sympathy and love. Annette was a great favourite at Le Roux's farmhouse, and often of an evening would she glide into the kitchen just as they were assembled round the hearth, and take her seat near the old soldier, or rather near André, by whom she was so fondly beloved, that the little fellow, on observing her entrance, would slide off his father's knee, and climbing up to Annette's lap, would gently lay his little head on her bosom. It was an affecting sight to behold the idiot girl, heedless of the stirring tales which interested all others save herself, while her vacant eyes were lighted up with affection as they rested upon her little favourite André.

Thus passed on many days of peaceful yet busy life at the farmhouse of La Mettraye ; but at length its tranquil course became troubled by one of those waves of sorrow which roll over the stillest surface of human life.

One evening Pierre came in looking ruffled and out of humour. Adèle, unused to see her goodman return home in this sort of mood, inquired of him what was the matter.

'Matter enough to vex all the saints in heaven,' replied he gloomily. 'Some villains have robbed me, on my way home from market, of half the produce of my harvest; and though there were four of them, they were all so well disguised, that I could not get one look at their faces; so there is no chance of getting back a single sou of my property. But where is André?—let him come and cheer up his old father.'

'André! André!' cried out Adèle from the door of her dwelling; 'come in directly. It is too late for you to be rooting about the garden; your father wants you.' But no bounding footsteps were heard upon the pathway; no childish voice responded to her call. The elder brothers hastened to seek for their little darling; but nowhere was he to be found.

'He must be gone to neighbour Bochart's,' said the father; 'you will be sure to find him on Annette's lap.'

'Yes, doubtless,' replied Adèle, whose motherly tenderness gave wings to her feet, albeit her step was no longer so elastic as it had been at the time of her marriage twenty years before. Quickly had she crossed the strip of vineyard which lay between her home and the cottage, and darting in at the door, cried out: 'André—where is André?'

'We have not seen the child to-day,' replied at the same moment Bochart and his wife.

'Not seen him!' cried out Adèle, turning pale, and trembling from head to foot.

'No, indeed, neighbour, we have not.'

'Has Annette seen him?'

The idiot girl, ^{when} on hearing this question, and seeing

Adèle's emotion, started up from the corner where she had been crouching near the fire, and gazed wildly around her. She shook her head with a low moan, rushed to the door, and looked out into the twilight, as if she would pierce through the gathering shades with her deep searching glance, and then returned with her hands clasped together in mute despair.

All this passed in a moment's time. Adèle hastened home to tell her husband the dreadful truth; and although for a moment he seemed paralysed with terror, yet he and his sons quickly dispersed along the banks of the river and up the neighbouring heights in quest of the missing child. Adèle, too, passed the night in groping about every spot where she thought it possible that her little one might have fallen asleep during his play; and the silent yet prayerful agony of that mother's heart, as she wandered along with a lantern in her hand, who may dare to portray!

Morning came with its bright and gladdening influences; but sorrowful was the repast around which the inmates of the farmhouse assembled, for no tidings had been received of André, and they met but for a few moments, previous to the renewal of their search. Evening closed without bringing one gleam of hope to cheer Adèle's sinking spirit. With that restlessness which accompanies undefined hope or fear, she turned her steps towards Bochart's cottage. The first words that greeted her on entering it were those of sorrow. 'My child! my child! Oh, where can my child be?' faintly murmured Bochart's wife, as she sat rocking on her chair with her face buried in her hands.

'What do you mean?' inquired Adèle, perplexed at her words.

'Do you not know that Annette is gone?'

'Gone!'

'Yes, gone; and her poor father, after a long day's

search, cannot find her anywhere. Oh, what shall we do without our daughter—our only daughter !’

‘And when did you miss her ?’

‘This morning, on going to her bedside, I found it all smooth and tidy as her own dear hands had left it yesterday. The poor darling never lay down on it at all ; and where she passed the cold dark night, heaven only knows.’

So saying, the poor woman burst out anew into a torrent of grief. Adèle gazed on her in silence. She was stunned by this unexpected blow. At length, taking Madame Bochart’s hand and pressing it to her bosom, she said in a suppressed voice : ‘May God have pity on us both !’ After a few moments’ delay, she returned to her own sorrowful home. The next day was one of deep and quiet grief both at the farm and the cottage. It seemed idle to hope that either of the children could have escaped death ; and the conclusion formed concerning them was, that in a moment of unguarded play André had fallen into the river, and Annette, in despair at his loss, must have sought death in the same impetuous current which had borne away her little favourite.

Another day had passed on—a day of fruitless search and of bitter sorrow. On the third evening after her loss, poor Adèle had seated herself mechanically in her accustomed corner by the fireside : her hands, usually so busy in blithesome labour, lay folded despairingly on her lap ; nor did she even venture to look up, from a dread of beholding the silent agony of her husband’s countenance. The door opened, but she stirred not, neither did she lift up her eyes. The common interests of life were dead within her heart—its petty incidents concerned her not. A light step approached her—a soft warm kiss was imprinted on her cheek. The little André lay with his infant arms clasped around her neck ; and Annette, who had borne him like a guardian

angel to his home, fell prostrate at her feet, overcome by fatigue, hunger, and emotion. Vainly should we attempt to describe the mingled feelings of surprise, joy, and thankfulness which filled the mother's heart at that moment; but after one long tender embrace André turned round, and seeing Annette on the floor and his sisters gathered around her, he leaped to the ground, crying out: 'Annette, my darling Annette, speak to me!—speak to your own little André!'

The child's voice seemed to revive the poor exhausted girl more readily than any of the simple restoratives which had been used for that purpose. She opened her dark eyes, smiled a moment upon him, and then sank for a while to repose. After some rest and refreshment, the inmates of the cottage and the farmhouse gathered around the young wanderers, to make inquiries concerning their three days' eventful history. Where had André been? How did Annette contrive to trace him out? When did they meet? The poor girl's head was too weak and wandering to give much information on the subject. She could only utter a few simple monosyllables; then weep and smile, and embrace those around her. But André, in his childish way, talked of looking for nuts; and spoke about a hollow tree and being frightened, and Annette wrapping him up in her cloak and giving him bread out of her pocket. And this was all they could learn on the subject; but their darling was safe. Annette was almost idolised for her devotion to the child, and God devoutly thanked for His great goodness in this deliverance.

Within two years of this event Annette was an orphan; and on the death of her mother, who survived Bochart but a few months, she was received as an inmate at the farm, and became unto Pierre and Adèle as a beloved daughter.

About this time the former, owing to some severe losses,

had decided on joining a party of emigrants who were going to settle in Texas. Adèle was loath to leave the land of her fathers, and to live and die on a strange soil and among strange people. In vain did Pierre represent to her the advantages accruing from emigration. 'Here we are poor,' said he; 'but in yon fine country we shall grow rich with our children.'

'But it will not be France—*notre belle France* !'

'I thought, Adèle, that wherever you had your husband and children'——

'Yes, yes,' said she, stopping his mouth with a kiss; 'wherever my goodman and my children are, *there* will be France to me.'

'Now,' rejoined Pierre, 'you are my *bonne petite femme* again. Let us only set out with merry cheerful hearts, and we shall get on famously.' So saying, he began to carol one of his old songs, whose burden was love and glory; then clapping Annette on the shoulder, he added: 'And thou, too, shalt come with us, my girl, and thou shalt have the care of André on board ship.'

A tear stood in Annette's eye; but whether it had its source in the hidden springs of joy or of sorrow, no one knew. That evening she was absent for some time from the farmhouse, and on being sought for, was found weeping on the humble grave beneath which her parents slept. She had shed upon it tears and flowers—the only offerings which the orphan girl had to bestow.

A month later, and the whole family embarked for Texas, and after a prosperous voyage landed at Galveston, together with a body of one hundred and fifteen other emigrants. It was a motley party; most of them well clothed, and all looking cheerful and happy. But among the various groups which clustered together on the wharf, none were more remarkable than the family party from the old farm of La

Mettraye. Pierre, in his green old age, erect and vigorous, was clad in a blouse, with his fur *casquette* on his head, and a stout knotted stick in one hand; while in the other was the well-known snuff-box, out of which he offered a pinch to some strangers standing by with that ease and courtesy which is so natural to a Frenchman. Adèle, now a middle-aged woman, stood by her husband's side, looking bright and healthy; while their sons and daughters were gathered around them, and the eldest youth carried his father's gun with evident pride, in the consciousness that he, too, was grown to be a man. Nor was the least striking one of this party the gentle Annette, who stood beside Adèle with the hand of the rosy-faced boy clasped within her own, *his* eyes wandering about with undisguised curiosity and delight, while *hers* rested fondly and anxiously upon him. It was evident that she regarded him as her peculiar charge.

The destination of Pierre and his family was a district of Texas named Bexar; and on landing at Galveston, they fondly imagined that their journeyings were over, and that they had reached the site of their intended home. 'Is not this Bexar?' inquired one of the sons. But although they looked disappointed on learning that there were some hundreds of miles of difficult country to travel before they could arrive at the promised land, yet the cloud seemed to rest but for a moment upon their cheerful countenances. Soon did the spirit of hope and joy revive within them, and they set off for their new home with that earnest and trustful activity which forms the best pledge of success amid the difficulties of a settler's life.

The emigrants from the banks of the Meuse have now been many years in Texas. They have formed for themselves there a pleasant as well as a happy home, and Annette's kind heart finds its full reward in the American wilderness, as it did on the favoured soil of *la belle France*.



LONG LOWISFORD.

PON recovering from a severe illness when I was about sixteen years of age, I was sent for change of air to some relatives whom I had never seen, residing in a distant part of England. Placed under the care of a friend travelling the same route, our journey was performed in the mail-coach, which passed through the town of M——, within seven miles of my destination. Here I was met by a respectable serving-man, and immediately transferred with my luggage to an old-fashioned roomy gig. It was a May evening : in the morning I had left a populous city, and now we were passing onwards through woodlands and pastures, as silent and lonely as the untrodden valleys of the 'far west.' We skirted the side of a swift river, and I was half frightened when we forded it ; but the song of birds, the gay wild-flowers of the waysides, and all the sights and sounds that met my eye and ear, conspired to lull me into a sort of dreamy consciousness of new life and happiness to come. On attaining the summit of a hill, the domestic, who had not hitherto spoken, pointing to a spire rising amid the greenery of a valley beneath, cheerfully said : ' We be just at home, miss : yonder is Long Lowisford.' .

I had seen but little of the country during my brief

career; and when we descended to the straggling village—well deserving its name of ‘long,’ a narrow gushing streamlet flowing throughout its length, with broad flag-stones across to reach the houses, the setting sun tinting the gray gables, and playing in a thousand prismatic hues on the latticed windows, whose broad sills displayed many brilliant bouquets—fairy-land unexplored seemed opening to my view. We turned up a coppice lane, and came to a water-mill with dripping slimy wheel; and the foaming waters in the mill-dam quite awed me. We passed an old solemn church, and drew up at the little wicket-gate of the parsonage-house, which seemed coeval in age with the church, the porches of both being much alike; that of the sacred edifice being festooned with ivy, and this with roses and chestnuts. I had longed to ask my conductor some questions concerning those with whom I was about to sojourn, but motives of delicacy withheld me from seeking information through this channel. I knew the family consisted of only two members—the Rev. Mr Evelyn and his sister Miss Bridget. I also surmised that they were ‘old people,’ at least according to *my* notion of antiquity; and I entertained many private doubts and fears that they might be ‘prim and strict;’ in short, old people who forgot that once they had been young themselves!

But now I was in the hall, with its polished floor of dark oak, and in the arms of the prettiest, sweetest creature I had ever looked on; and yet these terms are applied to a lady past threescore years! I instinctively felt as she addressed me that I was in the presence of a superior being, and that I must be gentle and good to win her regard, and forget all my wilful rude ways. There was a strange feeling at my heart prompting laughter and tears by turns; and Miss Bridget—for it was she—seeing me weary and emaciated, in a low, soft voice, spoke tender words of comfort

and encouragement. 'Poor, dear little creature! she is exhausted with her long journey: let us get her to bed, Folliman.' The call for 'Folliman' was answered by the appearance of a tiny, active old dame, many years Miss Bridget's senior, her *ci-devant* nurse, now housekeeper, or whatever she liked to be designated. But how widely different was the aspect of these two ancient women! Miss Bridget was a tall, slight figure, slight to attenuation, but still bearing the stamp of elegance and refinement. Her complexion was so transparently fair and pure, that I know not how I came to guess her age; for there were no wrinkles to betoken it; habitual heavenly calmness had bid defiance to the marks of time. Her silver hair was parted on her brow; but her clear blue eyes could never have been more intelligent and expressive than now. Scrupulous delicacy and neatness characterised her attire at all times; and her extremely beautiful hands and feet seemed more fit for show than use: indeed Miss Bridget's walks never extended beyond the garden; and her slender fingers brought melody from the curiously carved spinet, the tunes she invoked being rare antiquarian treasures. Yet let it not be supposed that her days passed in useless employments or amusement—no: she presided over the still-room, where, assisted by Dame Folliman, decoctions and herbal recipes were judiciously manufactured and dispensed to the poor; the doctor of Long Lowisford—happy place, there was *but* one!—jocosely affirming that Miss Bridget Evelyn deprived him of half his patients. Then there was not a poor child in the parish that did not give evidence of Miss Bridget's handiwork in the clothes it wore: and all the little creatures were so neatly attired, their garments composed of small pretty patterns, that strangers remarked what good taste and thrift distinguished the appearance of the Long Lowisford children. There was not a baby born into this world of woe in

Miss Bridget's parish whose first robe was not made by her fair hands. This was her sole recreation, except, indeed, the spinet and those gentle ambulations round the flower-garden. She never gathered flowers; and once I remember offering the dear old lady a moss-rose, but gently she put back my hand, saying with a half-stifled sigh: 'No; thank you, dear girl: I never accept and never present flowers.' There was a sadness in her low tone which set me thinking for many a day.

A very different individual in all respects was Dame Folliman—a sturdy, wiry, fidgety old soul—'here, there, and everywhere.' Nearly eighty, but with the activity of eighteen, her bead-like black eyes retained unwonted lustre; and she scolded the maids, and often kept the parsonage in a ferment when 'cleaning fits' were on her.

As to Miss Bridget, Folliman still treated *her* as a girl, chiding her sometimes as a fond nurse does a beloved nestling; still was Miss Bridget beautiful in Folliman's sight, and, according to her account, earth contained not another such angel in woman's form. 'I wonder she has never been married?' said I one day to the busy dame. 'It is very strange, so pretty and good as she is.'

'It would have been *stranger if she had*,' quoth the dame. But not another word could I draw forth.

But there was another individual of whom I have not yet spoken, whose affection for the sweet Bridget, if more silent than nurse's, was as sincere, and far more deep and fervent: this was her brother Mr Evelyn; and the attachment of this brother and sister had something touching and remarkable in it. He was a year or two younger than she, though he looked older, the lines of thought and care having impressed their marks on his thin pale face. He was indeed a grave man, and rarely lapsed into a smile; but ever bore about with him the conscious dignity of his high

calling. Devout meditation was stamped on his fine brow : he was a profound scholar and a finished gentleman ; but though uniformly courteous and benevolent, I never felt at ease in his presence. It seemed as if he could have no sympathies in common with me ; and my silly prattle ceased when Mr Evelyn's clear blue eye, so serenely cold, spoke, as I fancied, reproof to all levity. He was a faithful pastor, equally beloved by poor and rich : to the former he proved a valuable ' friend in need ' at all times, while the latter eagerly courted his society and advice.

During that long happy summer I was a continual source of annoyance and anxiety to Miss Bridget ; for as health and strength returned, so did hoyden propensities and outrageous spirits : besides, the novelty of a country life excited my wildest delight, and I rushed about more like a young savage than a young lady. Torn frocks in scrambling for wild-flowers, torn hands plucking them, wet shoes and muddy stockings, were among the least of my mishaps ; and had matters been no worse, and rested here, many months of suffering for myself, and anxiety for my kind friends, had been avoided. But despite admonitions and gentle warnings, received with derisive laughter on my part, and an obstinate determination to persevere in a wrong-headed course, I persisted in entering a meadow where a dangerous white bull grazed, to shew my ' superiority to cowardice,' as I said. Once too often I ventured ; the infuriated animal tossed me to the other side of the hedge, where I was found bleeding and insensible, one leg broken, and a deep gash over my left eyebrow. How tenderly I was nursed by Miss Bridget and Dame Folliman, and how bitterly did I reprove myself ! During convalescence I was haunted by a nervous anxiety to hear the worst—to have the *lecture over*, which I knew was deserved, and I thought was in reservation for me. Repentant and humbled, I earnestly desired to obtain

the pardon of Mr Evelyn and Miss Bridget ; and one evening, when my heart was full, I told Folliman this, for my restless yearnings were unbearable. They had gone to visit some neighbours, and the dame and I were alone together.

‘O Folliman!’ I exclaimed, ‘what must they think of me, so kind and good as they are? When they were young, did they ever do foolish, silly things?’

‘I do not think that Miss Bridget ever did a silly thing in her life, much less a sinful one, bless her dear heart!’ Nurse spoke with much warmth, placing an emphasis on the words ‘Miss Bridget.’

‘But Mr Evelyn,’ pursued I; ‘he seems to be above all the weaknesses of our nature: will he believe my desire to amend, nurse; and that I am heartily ashamed of myself?’

‘Set your mind at rest, Miss Anna,’ responded Folliman: ‘no one can feel for others as master does, because he has known a lifelong repentance for rashness committed in youth. I have had it in my mind to tell you the story when you grew better, because it will be a lesson to you for the remainder of your days: for the memory of your own sickness may pass away with the occasion of it; but when you think of Long Lowisford and dear Miss Bridget, I am sure in future years you will never be violent or headstrong again.’ And so saying, Dame Folliman settled herself in an easy-chair preparatory to a long gossip. The substance of her narrative was as follows.

Forty years ago, a large party were assembled at Dalton Park, the seat of Sir Reginald Dalton, in expectation of passing a joyous Christmas in the true old English style. Among the guests were Mr Evelyn and his nephew and niece, orphans tenderly brought up by that excellent man. Bridget was betrothed to Sir Reginald Dalton’s eldest son, and the marriage was to be celebrated during the ensuing spring. There was a large family of Daltons, and only one

daughter, a young lady about Miss Bridget's age. The boys were schoolfellows and companions of Edward Evelyn, whom his uncle destined for the church, always fondly trusting that he would become steadier and less headstrong as he grew older and wiser.

Of a bold, reckless spirit was Edward then, pre-eminently handsome and active, and the leader in every mischievous prank attributed to the Daltons and others. Much concern and anxiety he gave his worthy uncle by his wild ways, for he heeded neither reproof nor warning; he liked to do a thing, or he wanted a thing—that was sufficient—and the selfish impulse must be instantly obeyed. Even his sister Bridget, whom he dearly loved, had no power to check or control his violent spirits; and there was another whose disposition and character were more akin to his own—the darling and only sister of many brothers—the dark-eyed beautiful Helen Dalton, who, while admiring prowess and superiority in every form, took upon herself to admonish, chide, and rebuke her early playfellow, Edward Evelyn; for was she not his senior by two years? And in right of this seniority must not he receive the lectures thankfully and submissively? Whether Helen's mature age or sparkling orbs claimed dominion, is not certain; but that Edward frequently bowed to her decisions is so; though not unfrequently these high spirits clashed, when their mutual displeasure lasted long enough to make reconciliation sweet. It seemed not altogether improbable that at some future period the bond between the respective families might be cemented by another union besides that of Reginald and Bridget: the two fair girls, though opposite in many respects, were sisters in affection; and the more so, perhaps, because Reginald was dearer to his sister Helen than any of her other brothers. Nor was this partiality altogether inexcusable; for Reginald Dalton combined all those amiable

qualities which in domestic life bind and cement endearing love so closely.

Bridget was ever hopeful as to her brother's future career ; for he was a generous, warm-hearted fellow, despite his obstinate temper ; his brilliant abilities unfortunately rendering steady application to study of secondary importance to him ; he achieved, as if by instinct, what others plodded over at a snail's pace.

This Christmas party at Dalton Park, it may be imagined, was a merry one ; though one thing the boys earnestly desired, yet which no human means could procure. This one thing wanting to complete their enjoyment was a frost ; for there was a fine sheet of water in the park, and if that were but iced over, what splendid skating they could have ! Edward was passionately fond of this pastime ; and when a sharp frost *did* set in, and the earth was covered with snow, and the miniature lake with the much-wished-for ice, his delight knew no bounds.

'No skating to-day, boys,' said the baronet ; 'for the water is deep—very deep—and I insist that no foot shall venture to cross it. To-morrow, if the frost continues, we shall see what can be done.'

Sir Reginald Dalton's word was law with his sons ; but Edward Evelyn felt chafed and indignant at his peremptory mode of speaking, and he burst into his sister's dressing-room, swelling with indignation, exclaiming : 'I shall go on the lake to-day ; he is no father of mine ; and I won't be dictated to by him ! Uncle has gone to S——, and there is nobody to forbid me, and I know the ice is strong enough for skating. Come, dear Biddy, you have your bonnet on ; come and see me skate. Ah, what beautiful flowers you have here : I saw Reginald gathering them in the hot-house, and I guessed they were for you !'

'They are to place in my hair at the ball this evening,

dear Ned,' said Bridget; archly smiling as she added: 'There are plenty more snowy camellias left, and Helen's jetty braids will set them off to advantage. Will you not present her with some, and leave the skating, dear, for the peaceful employment of flower-gathering?'

'Helen may gather them for herself, if she likes,' pouted Edward: 'she is as dictatorial as her father. But I am not going to lose my sport for her whims; so come along, Biddy—I'm off!'

'Nay, Edward,' urged the tearful Bridget; 'I am going to walk with Reginald; but I entreat you not to go on the treacherous ice to-day: to-morrow, perhaps, you can all enjoy the pastime together, and we ladies will then come and admire your grace and dexterity.'

'A parcel of cowards, Bridget! I wonder you should turn against me too. But go I will, if only to shame them all!'

'Reginald is no coward,' said Bridget colouring; but she added no more, for remonstrance was unavailing when the evil spirit of obstinacy was uppermost with her brother. He darted from the room, scarcely hearing her last words, but shouting: 'Walk by the lake—I shall be there.'

Bridget rearranged the bouquet which her impetuous brother had displaced; and bending over the perfumed blossoms, she kissed them, half smiling and blushing at her own folly; but they had been gathered by the hand she best loved. She walked with her betrothed to the banks of the lake, in the hope that they might win Edward to leave the dangerous spot: but no; he was on the ice, and cried out exultingly when he saw them. When Reginald found that Edward was determined on disobedience, and would not listen to remonstrance, he moved away with Bridget, feeling as if his prolonged presence tacitly encouraged rebellion to his father's just commands. They left the water, and were entering the woodlands, when a shriek reached their ears—

a shriek as of one in extremity. Pausing for an instant only to gaze on Bridget's blanched cheek, Reginald darted back in the direction of the lake, whence the appalling sound proceeded. Bridget followed as quickly as her agitation permitted : she saw an arm and hand appear above the surface of the water ; and as Reginald grasped it, her brother struggled for dear life, and regained the solid ice, fainting and helpless. At the same moment the weaker part crashed in with Reginald Dalton's weight, who disappeared beneath it. Frantic screams for aid were unavailing ; for aid came quickly, though too late—too late ! Reginald had saved Edward's life at the expense of his own ; and his affianced bride witnessed the sacrifice. She had indeed cast herself into the water, with the impotent hope of saving that precious life : she was with difficulty rescued ; but her lover rose no more !

What words can paint Edward Evelyn's agonies and remorse ! His bereaved sister tended him during the months of almost hopeless derangement succeeding the awful catastrophe ; she never by look or word reproached or reminded him of the dreadful past, and her patient smile first greeted his recovered perceptions. The years following this fatal event were unmarked by recognition or forgiveness on the part of the Daltons ; and Bridget intuitively shrank from obtruding her sorrows on their remembrance, for was not she the sister of that brother whose very name brought anguish to the father's heart ? How often she thought of the warm-hearted Helen, her dear and early friend ; and Bridget yearned to hear her speak words of forgiveness ! When hope might once more dawn for Edward ; for now he

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